

Orphans of Merlin

Covenants of the Stonehenge Tribunal

– What is Generally Known to the Order

Blackthorn. The oldest surviving Covenant in the tribunal, established circa 900 AD, hidden amidst caves somewhere in southern Wales. Its fortunes have risen, fallen, and risen again over the decades, as new leaders rise, die and are replaced. Assumed to be powerful, but generally insular and keeping a low profile.

Burnham. Any Covenant established by a Tytalus Arch-Mage (in this case, Stephanus of Tytalus, who established Burnham about 20 years ago) will be noted by the Order. But there doesn't actually seem to be a Covenant here at all, and neighbours know nothing of "magi" or even "scholars"; there is just a tranquil Norfolk farming village, run by the amiable lord of the manor, "Stephen of Norwich".

Cad Gadu. The domus magna of House Ex Miscellanea – i.e. the home of Ex Miscellanea's leader, Immanola – somewhere in north Wales. The leading Covenant of a whole House should be an important place. But most people have no idea how to find Cad Gadu, and anyone who does stumble on it is told to leave, whoever they are. Ex Miscellanea's leader, it seems, has no interest in leading anything.

The Chines. One of several Covenants set up close to the great magical landscape of the Stonehenge stones and their environs – this one at a safe distance, with its headquarters (established forty years ago) on the Isle of Wight, presenting themselves to the world as "humble scholars". Rumours hint at a series of problems having beset the Covenant in recent years, including the violent death of its leader.

Sanguis Vento ("The Bloody Winds"). An island off the coast of Northumbria is surrounded by constantly stormy seas and protected by fierce tides. Records suggest that the original founders were newly-gauntleted Flambeau mages around 50 years ago.

Schola Pythagoranis. Rumour has it that a small group of young magi (presumably of House Jerbiton) recently set up a Covenant inside the walls of the University-town of Oxford.

It is also thought that a Covenant called Tagelyn was recently destroyed, bloodily, in a conflict with Blackthorn. Other Covenants are rumoured by name only, including Tintagel, and Dens ("Tooth").

Tribunal Meetings

There should be a general conclave of the magi of the Tribunal – i.e. a Tribunal Meeting – every seven years. But in fact, the last three Tribunal meetings have been inquorate. The last reference to a quorate meeting was nearly thirty years ago, after which proclamations were sent around the Order that The Chines had been granted sole rights to investigate and access the sites around the great ancient remains of Stonehenge itself.

Storyguide's Overview

This list of Covenants is drawn from cannon, but is not canonical.

- Blackthorn, Cad Gadu and Tagelyn have been in *Ars Magica* lore since the early days.
- Schola Pythagoranis is based on the same covenant in David Chart's *Heirs to Merlin* 4th edition supplement – though here (a) it has been moved to Oxford, in order to be at the heart of the area's mundane scholarly community, (b) the legalistic Quaesitor has been changed to Bonisagus (this is a bad setting for a legal reformer!) and (c) the magi are “de-aged” so that all three are assumed to be newly-Gauntleted, founding their first covenant, full of idealism (though the names have been kept the same so that the appearances and personalities described in *Heirs to Merlin* can still be used).
- Burnham is based on the covenant of the same name from White Wolf's commissioned but unpublished 3rd Edition supplements. For *Heirs to Merlin* David moved it to the north of England and made it rather villainous (possibly based on the reference to Burnham Wood in *MacBeth*?) but the original intent – which makes sense of the “Steven of Norwich” character mentioned in 3rd edition supplements – was that it was a Norfolk village (roughly where Burnham Market is today) with overtones of *The Stepford Wives*.
- The Chines, Dawn's End, Dens, Tintagel and Sanguis Vento are all original. Each has a very different theme, feel, and set of story potentials. (For example, Sanguis Vento looks at how a covenant might be completely warlike and in-you-face without directly breaching the code by coming into conflict with the local mundanes.)

The grand backstory to this is inspired by David Chart's 4th edition supplement, *Heirs to Merlin*. In that he suggests a period in Stonehenge when Tribunal meetings were never quorate, and when the Covenants had little contact with each other, but maintained relations which were, if not always cordial, generally peaceful. That is intriguing. Within the Order of Hermes, Tribunal Meetings are a key institution – probably the key institution – through which consensus is reached (or imposed) and so peace is secured. They are the places where disputes can be resolved without violence, where rights (to vis, for example) are confirmed, where disagreements can be aired and mediated before they fester or grow into feuds, where crimes can be judged and sanctions witnessed, where justice becomes communal and (relatively) transparent.... So how, without these meetings, has the Tribunal avoided plunging into anarchy? There must, presumably, be some alternative mechanism of power and resolution at play, some unseen actor behind the scenes?

From *Heirs of Merlin* the title of this saga background is derived: Orphans of Merlin. The players' magi are in a sense adrift here in the Stonehenge Tribunal, with the mechanisms established by their forebears abandoned, and forced to fend for themselves without the guidance of their elders.

Using This Setting With Heirs of Merlin

The setting is inspired by and supersedes Heirs of Merlin. In theory a storyguide could start with this setting in 1197 and try to have events develop so that the Tribunal approximates Heirs to Merlin by 1220. (E.g, does Melisende of Burnham die in a tragedy that forces Brunham to relocate to the far north, perhaps merging with a reduced Sanguis Vento, under the leadership of Stephanus...?) But this would require some extreme mental gymnastics, and probably doesn't improve the setting.

Using This Setting With The Contested Isle

This setting generally works well with *The Contested Isle*. That supplement summarises a variety of interesting covenants down the east coast of Hibernia, which could make great trading partners, allies, or sources of stories for players' covenants on the west coast of Stonehenge. Two changes are required, however, to *The Contested Isle*.

- Instead of "English" magi arriving in Ireland as pompous imperialists determined to "civilize" the romantic Gaelic natives, *Orphans of Merlin* provides a rather more nuanced set of motives for "English" magi to move to Ireland and try to impose their own assumptions on the locals. Specifically: some will be likely to be political refugees (who lost their vis sites when to The Chines, or found that the conspirators undermined their covenants and made life hard for them when they didn't back the conspiracy to make the Tribunal Meetings inquorate), who will naturally seek allies among groupings who seem familiar to them - the Norman, Welsh, English and Flemish groupings who moved to Ireland following Strongbow's expedition; others will be idealists who find that their image of a legalistic Tribunal is impossible in Stonehenge and so leave to find a new area to impose their vision on.
- Ashenrise in the *Orphans of Merlin* setting is consistent with 2nd-4th edition concepts of Ashenrise, but not with *The Contested Isle* – so Ashenrise needs to be reverted to this pre-5th edition version to make these compatible.

Using This Setting With The Lion And The Lily

Characters who would want to attend a Tribunal Meeting in order to socialise, trade, scheme and network might, finding no such opportunities in Stonehenge, look to neighbouring Tribunals, attending their gatherings as a guest. For these, the Normandy Tribunal's grand gathering may seem especially attractive, in particular given the Tournament which takes place there. Indeed, capable magi might even find themselves allying with others from Stonehenge to form a team to compete in this tournament. (In this case, check out the *Reworking the Normandy Tribunal Tournament* PDF for a structure which makes these gatherings more interesting for young magi.)

Using This Setting With Other 5th Edition Supplements

The feel of the saga, and the Hermetic politics involved, may require you to treat some of the canonical 5th edition materials as kind of like the Pirate's Code – more guidelines than actual laws. If you are playing with just the core rules, or with older editions' supplements, this isn't an issue, but if you have the Houses of Hermes 5th edition source books you will have to dial back on the more bureaucratic and overbearing ideas there.

Dates

To stay consistent with *Heirs to Merlin* (which says that in 1220 the Stonehenge Tribunal had only just started having quorate Tribunal meetings, after a period in which there were no effective Tribunals) you may want to start the saga towards the end of the 12th century – e.g. 1197. This is the usual start date for sagas in the early editions of *Ars Magica*, and means that if you want to stay consistent with *Heirs to Merlin*'s general timeline your players will play through a Tribunal-less decade or two (experiencing the uncertain but weirdly stable “chaos” of this period) and then the re-establishment of conventional Hermetic politics.

If you are not concerned with meshing with the timeline in *Heirs to Merlin*, you could, of course, start in 1220 as usual.

At A Glance

Covenants of Stonehenge

These major covenants are all detailed below:

- Blackthorn (South Wales)
- Burnham (Norfolk coast)
- Cad Gadu (North Wales)
- The Chines (Isle of Wight)
- Sanguis Vento (Northumbrian coast)

Minor covenants include:

- Dawn's End (near Leicester, possibly abandoned?)
- Dens (Forest of Dean)
- Murkfell (Yorkshire)
- Rossan / Castrum Spei (Pembrokeshire coast)
- Schola Pythagoranic (Oxford)
- Tagelyn (destroyed – see Blackthorn)
- Tintagel (Cornish coast)

Magi of Stonehenge

Magi of the Tribunal include the following. Magi marked HTM are described in the 4th edition supplement *Heirs to Merlin*. Mercere members are described in the *Orphans of Merlin – House Mercere* PDF. A total of 75-100 members of the Order of Hermes live in the Tribunal, so this list is not exhaustive.

House Bonisagus

- Caelernius – The Chines
- Fredegisa - Schola Pythagoranis (HTM. Guernicus in HTM; changed here to Bonisagus)
- Gualterius Quietam – formerly of Dawn’s End, now at The Chines
- Longenius – Sanguis Vento
- Stuscis - Rossan

House Bjornaer

- Gradia Wild – Dens
- Hljod – Sanguis Vento
- Steinmel - formerly of Dawn’s End, now at Dens

(2 others at Dens)

House Criamon

- Amissa – Murkfell
- Ilatersa the Thrice-Slain – unknown (dead?); formerly (?) of Dawn’s End
- Omhila – The Chines

House Flambeau

- Audemar Ironhand – The Chines
- Bors – Sanguis Vento
- Clementia de Verbrande – Sanguis Vento
- Ligef Fulgure – Sanguis Vento
- Rastko Pokol – Sanguis Vento
- Vitorius – Sangis Vento

House Ex Miscellanea

- Immanola, prima of House Ex Miscellanea – Cad Gadu (HTM)
- Culhwch – Cad Gadu (HTM)
- Ecghild the Herbalist - Dens
- Findabair – Cad Gadu (HTM)
- Gharad – Cad Gadu (HTM)
- Gwrhyr – Cad Gadu (HTM)
- Saegyth “the Bone-Eyed Witch” - Murkfell

House Guernicus

- Iudicium – Blackthorn. Presiding Quaesitor. (HTM)
- Repuria - The Chines

House Jerbiton

- Amauberge the Poet - Tintagel
- Edward of Milton - Schola Pythagoranic (HTM)
- Guillaume Gris / Guillaume le Majestueux - Tintagel
- Lumen - Schola Pythagoranic (HTM)
- Melisende of Burnham - Burnham

House Mercere

- Henryk of York – York Mercer House
- Leofric the Mercer – living in Winchester
- Gilbert Tacet - Burnham
- Hawys the Widow – travelling (winters in Burnham)
- Brianus the Swift – living near Hexham
- Uda of Bruges – no fixed location

House Merenita

- Auyr Dawnsinger – Tintagel
- Harddwch - Dens

(one more at Dens; five at Tintagel)

House Verditius

- Ernisius - Murkfell

House Tremere

- Talion – Blackthorn. Praeco. (HTM, described as Flambeau in HTM, changed here to Tremere)
- Fornax - Blackthorn (HTM)
- Goliard - Blackthorn (HTM)
- Goliath - Blackthorn (HTM, described as Tytalus in HTM, changed here to Tremere)
- Prelum - Blackthorn (HTM)

(2 other Tremere magi at Blackthorn)

House Tytalus

- The Arch Mage Stephanus of Tytalus, “Stephen of Norwich” - Burnham

Saga Arc(s)

Orphans of Merlin is a setting, not necessarily a single planned saga. It is a framework for the Hermetic background of sagas set in or around England.

The Tribunal's politics shift, over the course of a saga.

- At the outset, an informal conspiracy maintains the status quo without the usual mechanism of Tribunal Meetings.
- Over time, the conspirators lose the influence and credibility that they need to maintain the status quo, and the Tribunal's magi are motivated to reinvigorate the Tribunal's politics, with quorate meetings being held and a new balance of power emerging. The player characters have an unusual opportunity to help define the new tone and operation of the Tribunal.

Within the setting, the arc of Hermetic politics might run (to be amended as you wish to suit your saga), as follows:

- At the outset there are no quorate Tribunal Meetings. This is secretly due to the combined actions of Blackthorn, Burnham, The Chines and Sanguis Vento, who all have their own reasons for wanting Meetings to remain invalid.
- Soon, Blackthorn delves further into and researches more confidently into its deeper caves.
- Then Sanguis Vento starts to feel the repercussions of their violences and raiding, with their vengeful victims striking back against them.
- The Arch-Mage Stephanus of Tytalus at Burnham is reported to have died. Burnham becomes more insular and ceases to be actively involved in Hermetic politics.
- Blackthorn is overwhelmed by the forces deep in its caves. It is forced to relocate, most of its magi dead and its political power almost destroyed.
- Sanguis Vento finds itself under siege and embroiled in a war with enemies that it has angered from beyond the Tribunal. Seeking to strengthen itself, it turns to extorting aid from and raiding the vis sites of other covenants in the Stonehenge and Loch Leglean Tribunals.
- Emboldened by Sanguis Vento's actions, other covenants start to raid the vis sites of The Chines.
- Now The Chines realises that it needs a quorate Tribunal meeting to protect its privileges; half of the Stonehenge Tribunal wants protection from Sanguis Vento; and angry envoys from the Loch Leglean Tribunal are talking of a March. Now the tide has turned, and instead of Stonehenge being dominated by covenants who benefit from there being no Tribunal Meetings, now almost everyone wants a quorate Meeting to restore some sort of sanity, order and safety.

Blackthorn

The oldest surviving Covenant in the tribunal, established circa 900 AD, hidden amidst caves somewhere in southern Wales. Its fortunes have risen, fallen, and risen again over the decades, as new leaders rise, die and are replaced. Assumed to be powerful, but generally insular and keeping a low profile.

Blackthorn, lurking in caves beneath the Black Hills of southern Wales, is the Tribunal's largest covenant (one Guernicus and eight Tremere magi). Their leader, Talion of House Tremere, functions as the Tribunal's Praeco (since Immanola at Cad Gadu, who should have seniority, refuses to do so), and at a Tribunal meeting another of their number, Iudicium of Guernicus, is the senior Quaesitor. Several of their magi are old and powerful in their own rights. And the Covenant is highly disciplined, as the Tremere magi are all obedient to Talion and to the distant leaders of Tremere at Coeris. So, the covenant is not only large, but is also prestigious, powerful and unified.

But it is also happy to remain reclusive and apart from the Order, and to collaborate in the ensuring that quorate Tribunal Meetings are never successfully held, for reasons of their own.

Blackthorn's History, and Dark Secret

There is a lot about Blackthorn that seems dark. For some the mention of House Tremere may elicit suspicions of vampirism. Dark caves in a place called the Black Hills sound sinister. It would be easy to leap to the conclusion that the secret that the magi of Blackthorn keep is linked to diabolism or vampirism. (Let the players make those assumptions, if they wish.) But the truth is more elemental.

Around a century ago, the magi of Blackthorn began to delve into a set of deep caves near to their covenant. They began to pry into what seemed to be some sort of elemental darkness – a living, moving, motivated (though seemingly unintelligent) mass of magical dark which spread its tendrils through countless miles of cracks and crevasses and caves.

Philosophically and magically the darkness seemed interesting. Is this some sort of manifestation of a Platonic form of darkness? Could this “element” be harnessed, as an elementalists might harness fire or water? The problem, however, was that the dark strove to do what dark does – to extinguish; to extinguish light, warmth, hope, life.

But Blackthorn's investigations went well at first, and they crafted several magical devices with the augmenting strength of the darkness. But as they probed deeper, and experimented further, things went badly wrong. Their leader became inhabited – possessed, in a way – by the dark, and turned murderous; they were forced to kill him,

one of their junior members also being slain in the fighting. No trial or formal March was declared, and so the killing, technically, was illegal by the customs of the Order. More embarrassingly, while most of Blackthorn are of Tremere (including both of the slain magi), one of the magi who actually killed the possessed leader was of House Guernicus: after a long and distinguished career, an ageing Quaesitor had just, in effect, murdered a leading member of House Tremere.

Iudicium of Guernicus (never mentioning the events to his House) and the other magi of Blackthorn (with the approval of their Tremere superiors at Coeris) were happy to hush up the violence. And they were also keen to keep investigating the darkness – but with less risk to themselves. And so they sponsored the formation of a new Covenant, recruiting newly-Gauntleted young magi to form the Covenant of Tagelyn within the caves. The intention was that the old magi of Blackthorn would fund and support the young magi, who in exchange would continue the dangerous work of dealing with the darkness at close quarters, so that both Covenants together could benefit from the research into this new magical resource.

(It was at this time that Blackthorn concluded that it would be in their interests for the Tribunal Meetings to not be quorate. They did not want investigations into their leader's death, nor questions being asked about their research. And Stephanus of Tylalus agreed to help discourage other Covenants from attending – in exchange for access to their research into the darkness.)

Relations between Blackthorn and Tagelyn, however, were fraught from the start. A young Tremere maga named Fornax (filia of one of Blackthorn's senior members) was appointed by Blackthorn to head up the new Covenant's recruits (of Bjornaer, Criamon and Verditius), but these three juniors did not view the relationship quite as the dictatorial Tremere expected. While the Tremere-dominated Blackthorn, and their bosses back in Coeris, thought that Tagelyn was a servile and possibly temporary covenant that should do as those paying for it commanded, the three young recruits chafed under this yolk, and strove to become independent.

When Blackthorn punished their errant underlings by withholding funds, the magi of Tagelyn sought to extort food and money from the locals (petty Welsh lordlings who were not inclined to admit their own weakness or servitude to the English crown by appealing for help, but who were also too weak to fight a covenant of determined magi on their own.) Blackthorn demanded that the youngsters cease their raiding, issuing arrogant commands as if the magi were their servants. This only made the three young magi more determined to resist Blackthorn, side-lining their supposed mistress, Fornax, and withholding research into the darkness from Blackthorn. The cycle descended in a slow-motion spiral of resentment and recrimination for fifteen years, until in the end Blackthorn had cut off all aid and recalled Fornax.

The magi of Tagelyn, now entirely dependent upon what food and wealth they could raid or extort from the locals, pushed Blackthorn too far. Demanding that Fornax return several magical artefacts and piles of research notes which Fornax had "stolen" when

she left (in her mind, all that was Tagelyn's was really Blackthorn's anyway, and the three recruits were the thieves) they insultingly demanded reparations from their own former sponsors. And when Blackthorn would not bow to their demands, they sent a hopelessly ill-fated raid into Blackthorn itself to recover "their" property.

Furious, Blackthorn now rallied the local petty nobles, and led an attack on Tagelyn, to repossess a site which they had always considered theirs and to punish young magi who they believed had betrayed them, pausing only to vote and declare a somewhat questionable March upon the magi of Tagelyn. They consider that they were merciful in only killing one of the three traitorous youngsters, though most of Tagelyn's grogs were slain and its coven-folk massacred.

Ashenrise

The few who survived the attack on Tagelyn fled far away. Some grogs scattered to England or Gwynedd, while a couple followed the two surviving magi to Ireland where these have now founded a new Covenant, called Ashenrise.

The magi who founded Ashenrise nurse a festering grudge against the magi of Blackthorn who (as they see it) treated them like serfs, stole from them, and then drove them from their home and slaughtered their friends and servants. On the other hand they are aware that their predations upon the mundanes and ill-considered raid on Blackthorn could both be considered breaches of the code, and they are highly unlikely to pursue the matter at the next Grand Tribunal. If the great powers of the Order united behind House Tremere to rule against them, and the March against them were deemed legal, then they would be easy prey; on the other hand they doubt that the Order would hold the aged and well-connected leaders of Blackthorn to account. So for now Ashenrise dreams of vengeance and focuses on establishing their new Covenant, with little hope of seeing their enemies punished.

Blackthorn, for their part, are happy to forget that they ever actually declared a March, and are pleased that there is unlikely to be a quorate Tribunal Meeting that might investigate their highly dubious behaviour. So long as they have the caves back, and the angry young survivors of Tagelyn are far away, they are content.

Blackthorn Today

Blackthorn moved their covenant into the caves previously occupied by Tagelyn, so that they could focus on researching the darkness which, they now believed, they understood well enough to contain. And they restarted their research with much vigour, and little caution.

Their pride was nearly their undoing. They were hopelessly under-prepared to face the

darkness when they began to stir it up, and after two years of high-handed experimentation they were forced to abandon the deeper caves of Tagelyn and fortify the upper caverns against the now-agitated darkness. It is as if an ocean of angry elemental darkness now swirls malevolently beneath their feet.

In most ways the Covenant is, or at least seems to be, powerful. They have access to all of the vis sites of south Wales and more sites beyond, secured by certamen victories, customary use, and agreements at Tribunal meetings in the decades before such meetings ceased to be held. They have excellent relationships with the local Welsh lordlings and villagers, who view them as the liberators who drove out the “bandits” of Tagelyn. The Praeco **Talion of Tremere** and the senior Qaesitor **Iudicium of Guernicus** both reside here, along with several other magi, some of considerable power, including the up-and-coming **Fornax of Tremere**, the battle-scarred ex-leader of Tagelyn who is said to have been noticed by the leaders at Coeris. After three centuries, they have a range of investments and small sources of income (e.g. funding trade expeditions from nearby Bristol and renting out farms near Shrewsbury) that, managed by a custos, reliably provide sufficient funds. They enjoy the support of allies both near (Stephanus of Tylalus) and distant (Coeris). They have a moderate contingent of well armoured men-at-arms and crossbowmen (identifiable by a semi-heraldic motif on their tabards and shields – a bunch of purple/blue sloe (blackthorn) berries above the symbol of House Tremere, on a black background) who can be readily augmented by lighter armed spearmen and archers mustered from among their local mundanes allies.

However, having unleashed the darkness they now fight a nearly constant magical war against a tide which threatens to wash up from the deeper caves to engulf them. Stout iron doors, magical braziers blazing to drive back the shadows, and Rego Vim and Rego Ignem rituals keep the covenant safe – mostly. But intrusions of darkness past even their mighty wards bring danger into the covenant itself, and the magi have a prodigious appetite for Rego vis in order to power the magics that do keep them, for the most part, safe.

Yet they endure the danger for two reasons. First, should they retreat and let darkness burst forth then they might find that the broader Order will start to pay attention to what they have been doing; at best this will bring others who want to pry into the darkness (which they regard as their own resource, with great potential to benefit themselves and House Tremere) and at worst might lead to them being called to account for their previous dubious behaviour (they have killed two magi and destroyed a Covenant, so a March would not be inconceivable despite the circumstances and their political connections). Second, they still hope to tame and control the darkness, and a breakthrough always seems tantalisingly close.

Blackthorn and Canon

This is a modified version of Blackthorn as depicted in the 4th edition supplement *Heirs to Merlin*. The physical description of the Covenant found in *Heirs to Merlin* can be used,

as can the descriptions of many of the magi. However, this version tightens up the covenant's concept (making it a Tremere covenant with a resident Quaesitor, rather than a more mixed community), fleshes out the covenant and its backstory with Tagelyn, and provides the basis for a long-term story arc.

Burnham

Any Covenant established by a Tytalus Arch-Mage (in this case, Stephanus of Tytalus, who established Burnham about 20 years ago) will be noted by the Order. But there doesn't actually seem to be a Covenant here at all, and neighbours know nothing of "magi" or even "scholars"; there is just a tranquil Norfolk farming village, run by the amiable lord of the manor, "Stephen of Norwich".

To run a Covenant seems a moderate ambition. To control an entire Tribunal seems more of a challenge. But to control an entire Tribunal without anyone realising that you are doing it – ah, now, that is an ambition worthy of a Tytalus Arch-Mage!

Twenty years ago, soon after the last quorate Tribunal Meeting was held, The Arch-Mage Stephanus of Tytalus, appearing to be a young, genial lord named Stephen of Norwich, secured ownership of a small hamlet in northern Norfolk, suspiciously without any feudal obligations to the English crown. And in the last decades he has built it up into a thriving village.

Its location has many advantages. The flat countryside is fertile (this village's fields almost supernaturally so, its crops seemingly never failing and always producing bumper yields). Its herd of sheep, even in an area where the sheep are already carefully bred, is exceptional, and merchants in Lynn and Norwich pay top prices for their wool. Cart tracks and bridges, well maintained by the local mundane rulers, allow easy travel around the area. A sheltered estuary half an hour's walk north provides access for visitors by sea. And the great pilgrim site of Walsingham is less than a half day's easy walk away.

None of these advantages, however, are those usually sought by a community of magi.

The area has almost no magical aura. Stephanus did select the one site in the county that had an aura, but since building a church for his people this has now dropped to a paltry Magic Aura rating of just one. The village has no walls or visible defences. And there is no turb of grogs.

But the Covenant is not defenceless. The Aegis is strong. Stephanus has made it known that numerous Intellego spells watch over the village (if anyone suggests that this might constitute scrying upon visiting magi, in contravention of the code, Stephanus just smiles – he has warned people, so now it is up to them to stay away if they wish... though possibly there are no such spells, and this is a bluff). And although there are no grogs, a couple of the custos are exceptional fighters (further bolstered with enchanted weapons and armour), and it seems pointless paying soldiers when all of the local mundanes are so friendly with Stephanus and his wife that they will happily lend troops as required in the village were ever threatened. (Stephanus is a close friend of the Earl of Norfolk, the head of one of the mightiest extended noble families in England; he is a confidante of the Sheriff of Norwich; and though he rarely troubles to leave Burnham he will make a point of joining the King hunting in Thetford Forest should his highness

visit Norfolk, to keep on good terms with the royal family: with friends like that, one is already well defended.)

The Covenant Today

Burnham is home to the **Arch-Mage Stephanus of Tytalus** (known to everyone in the area as Stephen of Norwich) and his wife **Melisende of Jerbiton**, and also to **Gilbert Tacet** (a gifted member of House Mercere). The redcap **Hawys the Widow** also winters here.

To describe it physically would be to list the dozens of well-ordered cottages, the two hundred healthy peasants, the exceptionally efficient water mill, the village church decorated with inspiring frescos, the beautiful wild flowers which seem to crop up everywhere, the flocks of animals in perfect condition. Nobody would list – because nobody notices – the library or laboratories, hidden by both mundane and magical obscuriments beneath the floors of unremarkable cottages. But what everyone will notice is just how nice it is here. It is simply really nice. Really, really nice. And the people are really happy. Really, really happy. The peasants' excellent physical health, low infant mortality rates and plentiful, delicious food might partly account for this – but not entirely – and visitors can be spooked by just how well everyone gets on, how strong the marriages seem, how often everybody smiles.

The Conspiracies

Of course the home of a Tytalus Arch-Mage is the heart of multiple conspiracies. But not necessarily in the way one might expect.

It is unsurprising that Burnham controls a network of spies and diplomats which give it exceptional intelligence and influence. But this network is focused entirely on England's mundanes. To mess with other magi would be too obvious, and too likely to be discovered; to keep tabs on the mundanes allows the Covenant to win friends and trade favours. The Covenant's vis supplies, for example, are almost all based on deals done with mundanes who hand over odd things gathered on their lands without knowing that these are what a mage would call "vis". Maintaining these intelligence sources and mundane relationships are tasks split between on one hand a small cadre of travelling, silver-tongued diplomats who report to Stephanus, and a network of rogues and spies controlled by Helewise Tacet (wife of Gilbert Tacet of Mercere).

The greatest single conspiracy that Burnham is involved in is, of course, the conspiracy to control the Tribunal without the usual Tribunal Meetings. But Stephanus makes no effort to actually run this conspiracy. On the contrary, he has contrived a situation where the magi of three powerful Covenants – Blackthorn, The Chines, and Sanguis Vento – all think that they initiated the idea of rendering the meetings inquorate. Stephanus

planted the seeds and encouraged the ideas, but each of these three thinks that they were the ones who drove the plan. And now each of these three works to keep the Tribunal running smoothly without the usual meetings. Stephanus now simply offers encouragement and advice to these three, while occasionally helpfully intervening if problems arise.

Of course “help” and “advice” means that Stephanus, really, pulls the strings. Should he ever want any of these three to do something they don’t want to do, he can frame it as a sacrifice that they will have to make to preserve the status quo, and they will eventually agree.

What makes this system work is two things. First the main players in the conspiracy (Blackthorn, The Chines, and Sanguis Vento) all think that the situation is contrived to personally benefit them, so they have every reason to maintain it. Second, Stephanus has no desire to abuse the informal power that this gives him: he set himself the challenge of invisibly controlling a whole Tribunal and, as far as he is concerned, he has accomplished what he set out to do; he is very satisfied with this, and he doesn’t need to jeopardise his achievement by abusing his power.

The Perfect Village

Melisende of Jerbiton was born in a manor house, daughter to a knightly family. She expected, from birth, to rule over a village of serfs. And so when her Gift manifested and she was taken away to become a mage, she saw that she would soon have power to not only rule, nor rule well, but to rule perfectly – to become the best possible guide and guardian to the peasants.

She founded Burnham with Stephanus, and although there is eighty years in difference between them (though they look the same age, as she has only recently begun with her Longevity Ritual) they were soon married, and committed to crafting Burnham as the ideal village. Here, conventionally enough, she has arranged that Herbam and Animal spells ensure the fertility and health of crops and herds alike, providing ample surpluses that can be reinvested in the well-being of the people (as well as in funding the Covenant’s spy networks and other conspirators). But she uses other magics which magi would often use to gain advantage or victory to instead rule wisely and make her people happy; she never casts any long-lasting magics on the people, wanting them to build their own lives as well as they can, but she will use Mentem magics extensively to understand and guide them: among her mastered spells she has found both Perception of the Conflicted Motives and Posing the Silent Question, for example, to be invaluable in guiding her people towards happiness; and Creo Corpus powers that might usually be used to craft spells to heal wounds she has used to invent spells to ensure safe and healthy childbirth, and easier recovery from common injuries and illnesses. And just as she studiously uses magic to benefit the people, she is equally driven to attract and inspire the best settlers to the village: for example, the parish priest that she has selected has the best pastoral skills of any clergyman in Norfolk, and his empathy, insight and yet

firmness in confession is inspiring for the peasants; the artists that she hired to paint the frescos inside the church were masters of their art; the performances of the minstrels who she encourages to stop by (perhaps aided by Notes of the Delightful Sound) bring wonder to many balmy evenings; and the manor house's cook (even without the sometimes applied Taste of Spices and Herbs) is a culinary genius.

This, Melisende, contends, is what magic is for. Stephanus is inclined, in his old age, to conceded that she has a point. After all that he has achieved he would never say that he has wasted his Gift. But he suspects that his wife will make more constructive use of hers than he has of his.

The Death of Stephen of Norwich

Stephanus has won countless victories. In his younger years he picked fights just for the fun of defeating opponents. In later life he honed the orchestration of conspiracies, as if he were playing multiple simultaneous games of chess. He loves to play. He loves to win. He is unaccustomed to losing.

But as his wife Melisende has observed, his victories were sometimes bloody, his lies uncountable, and his delight in them a manifestation of the sin of pride. His soul, undoubtedly, is going to hell. This saddens his wife. It also annoys (and scares) Stephanus. What is the point if, after a hundred years of victories, one loses in the final game and is cast defeated into hell for eternity?

So, a few years after the start of this saga arc, Stephanus fakes his own death. (He might, still succumbing to the sin of pride, attend his own funeral to hear what people say of him.) He forswears his magics, passes his magical artefacts and other treasures to his wife, and heads off on crusade. His wife weeps as he departs, but this is a victory for both him and for her: for Stephanus he can save his soul fighting in the Northern Crusades or in the Holy Land; and Melisende believes that this way she and her husband might be together again in heaven.

For Burnham this is a turning point, but not necessarily for the worse. Without Stephanus orchestrating his network of diplomats, the covenant's influence wanes somewhat – though Helewise Tacent's spies remain just as effective. But with Melisende of Jerbiton now in charge, perhaps recruiting other magi who share her vision or who can work towards it, the covenant reorients itself on not only making Burnham the perfect village but on improving the lives of friends and neighbours, too.

Other magi may see opportunities here. Mercenary diplomats now unemployed by Burnham might offer their services to other covenants. Burnham, honing techniques to improve quality of life (important to ageing magi seeking easier Ageing rolls, as well as hoping to improve the morale of their people) is now a potential ally for benevolent covenants. Vis sites subtly controlled by mundanes on Burnham's behalf might now be easier for other covenants to access.

But the impact on the Tribunal is more dramatic and far-reaching. Without Stephanus, the conspiracy to maintain the status quo starts to unravel. Now, when Blackthorn falls and when Sanguis Vento provokes open conflict, there is no-one with the skills, deviousness and connections to hold everything together.

Burnham and Canon

This version of Burnham is consistent with the unpublished 3rd edition concepts of Burnham. It is completely contrary to the published 4th edition version.

Cad Gadu

The “domus magna” of House Ex Miscellanea – i.e. the home of Ex Miscellanea’s leader, Immanola – somewhere in north Wales. The leading Covenant of a whole House should be an important place. But most people have no idea how to find Cad Gadu, and anyone who does stumble on it is told to leave, whoever they are. Ex Miscellanea’s leader, it seems, has no interest in leading anything.

Is **Immanola** losing her mind? Is she quietly working on some great plan to re-shape the Order? Is she somehow orchestrating or profiting from the dysfunction of the Tribunal? Outsiders try to judge Immanola and her House by their standards. But Immanola is not Stephenus; Ex Miscellanea is not Tremere.

House Ex Miscellanea has a hundred members, all doing their own thing; they don’t have a direction, nor a plan, and Immanola has no desire to impose one on the world. She has an unspoken philosophy, that life is better than death, happiness better than sorrow, kindness better than cruelty; and she has always gained great satisfaction from helping, creating and building, despite living in a world where many seem intent upon destroying and controlling. But she almost deliberately avoids striving for anything greater. Those who strive most passionately, she has noted, often leave a trail of misery and destruction in their wake. Instead, she is happy to be a kind of elder to her House and to those magi who share her general approach to life – perhaps advising or even assisting a little if asked, but generally just letting people get on with their lives.

Visiting the Covenant

Is this really a covenant? A small island, ringed by twelve-foot-high cliffs, with just three little cottages and a landing jetty?

The island stands in a small lake. One might hope that the peasant who lives on the island, who fishes from the lake and has a boat tied up at the jetty, might come and fetch you if you hail him – but he won’t. In fact, he enjoys the assistance of the magi (his health is excellent and the fish are always plentiful) specifically on condition that he tells all visitors to go away. Of course he tells them to go away in Welsh; he doesn’t speak any other languages. So one may have to improvise a raft or swim a hundred yards to get to the island’s jetty, and, having made the effort, one will not receive a hospitable greeting.

Once on the island, there are three small cottages. One is for the fisherman; one is his store-house and workshop; one is a guest cottage with two small beds, which the fisherman might begrudgingly accept that a visitor could stay in over night (Hawys the Widow stays here for one night a year, in case the magi might one day want her to take a message). And there are two pillars, flanking a white-paved path, leading off the edge of the island.

Of course if the magi of Cad Gadu want you to be able to follow that white path, you will be able to. But they don't. So you won't be able to travel beyond the pillars, and the three huts are all that you will see of the Covenant.

In theory the magi could defend their island very effectively. Three of the five who live beyond the pillars are advanced in years and power, and two are extremely accomplished spirit masters. To whip up storms to drag to a watery doom any boat that tries to cross, to fill the lake's valley with poisonous fog, to line the tops of the cliffs with an army of warrior-ghosts... all these and more would be within their powers... But why should they bother? Easier to just ignore outsiders, safe in the knowledge that without the covenant's consent none can get beyond the pillars.

The Hall of Final Stories

Some decades ago, Immanola defeated a powerful spirit, who had imprisoned the ghosts of newborn babes in a hall made of bones. Or perhaps she dreamed that she defeated him; she doesn't quite remember. Sometimes the path of spirit mastery is like that.

Having won her victory and freed the ghosts, she returned the next night to the hall and shaved from the inside of its bone gates a dozen pale slivers. And then she fashioned these into bone keys. One she has strapped to the back of her left hand, and so, when she sleeps, she can walk in her dreams back to the hall; the others she has given (or will give – she has a couple left) to people whom she admires and empathises with.

Mostly the recipients of the keys are people who share her general attitude; many, though not all of them, are still alive. Any key-holder who sleeps with the key in or on their left hand (strapping it to the palm is a practical approach) can visit the hall in their dreams. Perhaps the hall only exists as a place of dreams; or perhaps it is in a magical regio which their spirits visit. Either way, there they may meet Immanola, perhaps without recognising her, and other guests who pass through her hall.

Aside from Immanola and the key-holders, two other types of visitors appear in the hall. First, there are Immanola's spirits – beings who over the years she has bound, tamed or befriended. Second (and she has adapted the magic of the hall specifically to attract these) there are ghosts of the newly dead – spirits who still have a story to tell, who cannot rest peacefully until someone has heard what they are desperate to say.

And so each night, Immanola holds court in her small hall of bone, where listeners cluster around a hearth-fire that never burns down, silent as the dead tell their tales. There are stories of guilt and hope, of betrayal and longing, of secret joys and gnawing secrets, of fear and gratitude. Stories that the people thought that they could never tell, or that nobody has been willing to hear, are told here. It can be harrowing, beautiful, tragic or pathetic. But in the end, the dead are free, and they can pass beyond the bone doors that no living person can open. And sometimes, in response to the stories, someone will act: Immanola might send one of her spirits to send a message to the

living, perhaps with a warning or a reassurance or a secret; one of the key-holders might hear a story which, when they awake, they choose to act upon; and very occasionally they will hear from the dead of one who sounds worthy to join them in the hall, perhaps in time to become a key-holder.

Cad Gadu and Canon

This version of Cad Gadu is based on the version in Heirs to Merlin, which can be used for descriptions of the magi here, and for what lies beyond the white pillars.

The Chines

One of several Covenants set up close to the great magical landscape of the Stonehenge stones and their environs – this one at a safe distance, with its headquarters (established forty years ago) on the Isle of Wight, presenting themselves to the world as “humble scholars”. Rumours hint at a series of problems having beset the Covenant in recent years, including the violent death of its leader.

At the last quorate Tribunal meeting, the assembled magi voted to grant to the Covenant of The Chines exclusive rights to investigate the great complex of magical sites centred around the standing stones from which the Tribunal itself is named: Stonehenge. Defined by the Tribunal as all sites of ancient magical significance (mounds, stones, etc.) between Bristol, Oxford, Canterbury and the south coast, this encompassed perhaps two dozen sites which are variously portals, foci of magical energies, vis sites, etc.

The decision was not unreasonable. Interference with the sites had, in the past, caused magical backlashes which had harmed both magi and mundanes. Competition between magi and expanding mundane populations made the situation seem increasingly risky. And although The Chines was newly established, its founders Miryam Cautus of Guernicus and Caelernius of Bonisagus, had established excellent reputations as prudent researchers into ancient magics while resident in the Rhine Tribunal.

On the other hand, this cavalier removal of customary rights of access and use from existing covenants seemed heavy-handed, and would likely be challenged and reconsidered at the next Tribunal. The founders of The Chines were worried that they might not keep their new privileges. Fortunately, they had a helpful friend who could advise to talk this over with. Stephanus of Tytalus (who had seemed neutral in discussions on the matter in the Tribunal, but in truth had secretly brokered the deal with Blackthorn to grant them these magical sites, and seemed a good ally) mentioned that it would be to their advantage if the next Tribunal meeting were not quorate – if the Meeting could not pass a motion against them, then in time opposition to their holding of the sites might wane. And so they not only stayed away from the next Tribunal Meeting (entrusting Stephanus with their sigils, just in case the Meeting were valid) but also encouraged others to stay away.

They were delighted when their ruse worked. The next Tribunal Meeting did not have enough magi to be valid, and no challenge to their ownership of magical sites could be made. Indeed, some members of rival covenants even petitioned to join The Chines. Now they are content to continue this strategy, each Tribunal Meeting after the next, to stay away, discourage others from attending, and entrust their members' Sigils to Stephanus as insurance in case a Tribunal is quorate.

The Chines Today

The Covenant has established excellent relations with the de Redvers family, which rules the island (as vassals of the King of England, but largely doing as they please) from Carisbrooke Castle, and also with the lords of the individual manors and with the island's various monasteries. This allows its members easy access to the many mounds and standing stones on the island, access to several respectable mundane monastic libraries, and the friendly protection of the local lords. Indeed, the covenant is woven into the fabric of life on the island, attending feasts and celebrations, providing medical aid or tuition to the leading citizens, etc.

Each mage maintains their own Sanctum, which often grow into little communities apart from one and other. The island has numerous areas with low magical auras, and each of the magi have each settled somewhere that suits them and built a household around themselves, typically with a couple of bodyguards and others who can act as servants (cooking, cleaning, etc.)

Three magi live on what seem to be wealthy farms, with their bodyguards sometimes helping with the farming and the farmers providing a ready supply of cooks, cleaners, messengers, lookouts, etc.

- **Caelernius of Bonisagus**, the surviving founder, now elderly but with an exceptional understanding of the magics that the covenant has been studying for three decades
- **Repuria of Guernicus**, filia of the founder Miryam Cautus, the covenant librarian (the library is in a stone-lined chamber beneath her farm, accessible from a vestibule immediately outside her sanctum)
- **Gualterius Quietam of Bonisagus**, a seasoned researcher who joined from the covenant of Dawn's End (now believed defunct) two decades ago

Omhila of Criamon also joined from another of the covenants which had lost access to magical sites, and can now be found in a series of chambers which she has hollowed out within a cliff on the south edge of the island.

Audemar Ironhand of Flambeau, the covenant's newest recruit, has not bothered establishing a laboratory, but has taken a chamber as a guest of the baron in Carisbrooke Castle, where the lord is happy to give hospitality to a champion who can fight with seemingly super-human skill. Whereas all of the other magi are keen to investigate the ancient sites and magics that the covenant has access to, he instead expects to learn from their research second-hand, reading what they discover and wielding what they unearth if it improves his martial prowess.

The covenant is not wealthy, and maintains no grogs beyond the mages' few bodyguards. But it does have several non-martial specialists, including a parchment maker (with a small workshop on Repuria's farm), a highly trained physician (usually staying at the

castle and willingly tending to the nobles there), two scribes, a book-binder, a goldsmith (with a talent for working gemstones, as well as metals), and a mundane alchemist – the latter three all living in the town of Newport, where they undertake commercial work as well as performing tasks for the magi.

Challenges to The Chines

The Chines faces threats both external and internal.

First, this group of peaceful scholars are poorly placed to enforce their claims to the magical sites that they “own”. It is true that without quorate Tribunal Meetings the covenant’s access to its array of magical sites cannot be revoked. But equally, without Tribunal Meetings there is no easy mechanism to censure those who might trespass onto those sites, flouting their rights.

Over the last decade magi, including both solitary mages and also residents of Dens, have increasingly ignored the old Tribunal ruling that The Chines alone should have access to these sites. Vis-yielding sites, in particular, have attracted pillagers. And The Chines has no obvious way to keep such magi away.

This is why the peaceful covenant has recently recruited an ambitious, martially-oriented Flambeau mage, Audemar. Their hope is that he will be able to intimidate and drive off interlopers, if necessary resorting to Wizard’s Wars to punish vis-thieves. However, Audemar is still young, and the interlopers may not be easy prey for him. If these conflicts escalate to the point where magi are killed or injured, then this might invite revenge declarations of Wizard’s War or even illegal reprisals. And a covenant with no central location (and so, no Aegis) might be ill-prepared to deal with such counter-attacks.

Secondly, the covenant faces internal divisions.

With magi working independently – sometimes meeting only once a year, for an annual council meeting – they have little loyalty to each other, and no day-to-day way to cooperate together.

Conflicts over resources provide regular triggers for disagreement, with the magi often giving contradictory instructions to covenfolk (notably to their over-worked scribes) or disagreeing over how the covenant’s limited wealth should be spent.

But underlying these routine disagreements are festering grievances. Gualterius Quietam and Omhila only joined because their previous covenants were deprived of magical sites which they wanted access to, and their loyalty to their new covenant may be weaker than their resentment at having to abandon their friends in their former (now derelict) covenants and their consequent dislike of Caelernius. Meanwhile Caelernius and Gualterius are in competition with each other to divine magical insights into the ancient

sites that they investigate, but at the same time they are united in being appalled by Omhila's disdain for magical theory, seeing her mystical interests in these ancient sites as a waste of time (and so, squandered resources).

The risk of magi leaving the covenant, or perhaps dividing into two rival covenants, would become especially real if The Chines cannot keep control of its magical sites. This privileged access is all that really holds the magi together.

The Death of Miryam Cautus

The tensions within The Chines have also been exacerbated by the death of one of the two founders, **Miryam Cautus of Guernicus**. She had become the mages' de facto leader, reconciling them when they squabbled and keeping them focused on the covenant's goal of deciphering the secrets of the ancient sites, and without her influence the magi may become more fractious.

Moreover, the manner of her death suggests a possible threat to the magi, and to their investigations.

She had hypothesised that the standing stones of Stonehenge itself were a series of doorways, to realms of magical spirits (possibly associated with the spirits which mundane occultists associate with stars). Her attempt to open such a door should have been the culmination of her life's work. Instead, it unleashed something which destroyed her and her retinue. Neither she nor her guards returned from their expedition to the ancient site, and when a search party was sent all that was found were scattered scraps of tattered clothes, shredded human flesh, and broken weapons. The worst case would be that she has unleashed something which might continue to be a threat in the future.

The Chines and Canon

The Chines are not drawn from any published *Ars Magica* supplements.

Sanguis Vento

An island off the coast of Northumbria is surrounded by constantly stormy seas and protected by fierce tides. Records suggest that the original founders were newly-gauntleted Flambeau mages around fifty years ago.

Sanguis Vento is built and run for one purpose only: to wage war. It is a covenant that is in a constant state of battle-readiness, always planning and executing raids.

The covenant building itself is a castle on an island, and every inch of the building and every angle of approach has been calculated for maximum defensive effectiveness.

- All of the winds between 15 and 150 yards are a constant raging gale, which will drive ships onto the rocks around the island, while the waters within Sight range have fierce tides at the surface which drag swimmers beneath the waves. Immunity from the winds requires ships to fly a pennant which matches a pennant hung in the Covenant's Council chamber – and that pennant is changed every lunar month, so that those approaching must know what pennant to fly in advance if they are to pass through the storm. Strong winds and near constant rain extend about a mile further out, but it is only this hundred-yard stretch which is lethal. The last 15 yards before the shore are uncannily quiet, in order to provide safe anchor for longships and unimpeded fields of fire for crossbowmen on the walls.
- Rocky reefs have been sculpted protecting the island's shores (the island used to be bigger – Perdo Terram magics have reduced much of what was land to wave-battered shards of rock). Only one approach is safe for boats, that path watched by enchanted ballistas, set on a lookout tower enchanted so that guards who benefit from True Sight of the Air and Eyes of the Cat.
- The covenant's landing stage is on the opposite side of the island from the gate (or gates – two sets of double doors and portcullises). In order to walk from the landing stage to the doors, a visitor must walk along a narrow path, just wide enough for a small cart, with the castle wall on one side and sharp rocks on the other. The castle wall is lined with alcoves containing statues of knights which, it is rumoured, can be animated with formulaic spells to attack those on the path, and the path itself is overseen by murder-holes through which boiling water, magical fire, crossbow bolts, etc., can be rained on those approaching.

And that is just what an attacker would encounter before reaching the main gates.

Visiting the Covenant

A visitor to the Covenant should seek out a small compound on the coast overlooking the sea. Here is a small lodging house, where magi and high-status guests are offered

private rooms, warm baths, and good food and ale, while their servants can sleep on pallets in the main room. Across the courtyard from the lodgings is a stable and storehouse where traders may drop off goods purchased by the covenant from merchants in Newcastle 25 miles away. On the rocky coast is a jetty.

From here the fortress is invisible, for though it stands less than a mile off shore the constant storm presents a wall of cloud and rain. But there by the jetty a stone has been laid on the ground, carved with the symbol of House Flambeau. In order to request entrance a visitor is expected to cut their palm, place it flat on the stone and announce themselves and the reason for their visit. (The magi like the idea that to request access a visitor must bleed, and must then bow down far enough to touch the ground, perhaps even kneeling.) This request is heard by two lookouts on the island whose hut sits at the end of the castle's landing jetty (where they keep watch over the moored ships, as well as waiting for requests for entry). One of the watchmen then informs the magi, who may, give the order to send a small boat out to collect the visitor.

The magi usually only accept visitors at one time – at dusk on the evening of the full moon. They may consider well-known visitors at other times (e.g. Hawys the Widow, the redcap), but the intent is that the only time they will accept another mage is on the night when they can legally declare a Wizard's War. The visitor is ferried through the storm to the castle (the boat flying the appropriate pendant), allowed through the gatehouse, into a courtyard and then into a small, dimly-lit audience chamber. There the magi of Sanguis Vento will meet with the visitor, discuss what needs to be discussed, and then tell them to leave; they find that negotiating with visiting magi is easiest when the visitor knows that the hosts can declare a Wizard's War on them at any time in the discussions. The boat then ferries them back, and immediately after it has returned to the castle the pennant in the council chamber is changed.

Sanguis Vento at War

Sanguis Vento is always at war.

In winter they will have two warships and two trade vessels moored in the calm waters a few yards off the covenant's coast, and one warship away, either raiding or scouting or visiting allies to coordinate the next year's activities (they only have one ship enchanted to reliably survive the winter seas). Winter is a time for training and planning.

Through the rest of the year, a succession of raids and campaigns are launched, and in the middle of summer all three of the warships and both trade ships may be absent.

Their strategy is based on several principles:

- They distinguish between those who are considered potential allies (e.g. the east of Scotland, and the south coast of the Baltic) versus those which are potential targets (Scandinavia and the east coast of the Baltic). They never cause trouble in areas where they seek allies.

- They barely set foot in England. Their demeanour may be belligerent, but by avoiding any but simple, commercial contacts in England they don't actually antagonise the locals at all. A storm-shrouded castle may be unsettling for neighbours but they never give the locals reason to hate them (and for some merchants they are highly profitable).
- Each year there will be one major raid or attack. This will always be conducted with mundane allies, typically requiring two ships and 60 grogs and greater numbers of mundane allies, and lasting for 2 or 3 seasons. Examples may be: raiding magical sites and fighting Scandinavian sorcerers down the coast of Sweden; helping a Scottish faction defeat its allies (in return for that faction providing ships, silver, or manpower for an expedition the following year); launching a joint raid with the Teutonic Knights in the eastern Baltic (the crusaders get to keep any seized territory, and the magi take away any magical, pagan or unusual items); extorting silver and tribute from towns on the coast of Norway in order to build up the Covenant treasury; etc.
- Each year there will likely be a ship making runs to vis sites. Most of the Covenant's claimed vis sites are in contested territory (many on the coast of Scandinavia) and harvesting vis often involves skirmishing with the locals.
- Campaigns also need to occasionally "recruit" young males. Boys between 10 and 13 (acknowledged as slaves in the eastern Baltic, more euphemistically called "captives" further west) are irregularly gathered (usually as "gifts" from allies), so that they can be subjected to five years of brutal training, hazing and psychological conditioning in order to endure a steady supply of highly trained teenage grogs to join the turb.

By focusing their campaigns in areas where the Order isn't active (mainly in Scandinavia, though more questionably east towards the pagan lands of Lithuania) they claim that they are not interfering with mundanes in any way that will bring ruin on the Order. Their targets are nowhere near other Covenants. However, their attacks are so crass and so consistent that it seems unlikely that a functional Tribunal would be comfortable tolerating their aggressions – even if aimed far away. It is perhaps only a matter of time before a magically enhanced fleet from Scandinavia sails towards Northumbria to avenge these regular attacks, probably bringing considerable ruin upon the surrounding area – and that may be hard to explain to the northern English magnates (the earl of Northumbria, the Bishop of Durham, the royal commanders of Newcastle, etc.).

Sanguis Vento, however, has no desire to scale back its attacks. In part this is because war is, simply, what they do – it is what they are organised for, and what fires them up (quite literally, in the case of some of their Flambeau magi). It is their reason for being. Also, in the last two decades they have grown larger and more ambitious, now maintaining nearly 200 people in their castle (nearly half of them fighters), and there is simply no way that they could maintain such an enormous headcount without regular supplies of tribute (extorted silver) and other loot.

Rego Aquam/Animal spells certainly attract a lot of fish to nets outside the Covenant, and Creo Aquam purifies sea water to be drunk, and such magics plus extensive stores

ensures that the covenant could survive a siege for over a year. But fish and water only go so far. Ultimately, the covenant must still import additional food, exotic laboratory supplies, iron for the weapon-smiths, parchment, etc. And war (seeking loot and tribute) is the only way that the Covenant knows to generate enough money to support itself.

In other words, war has become a self-perpetuating necessity. A couple of decades ago this little covenant, with just one warship and a dozen grogs, decided (after an illuminating chat with that helpful Tylalus Arch-Mage) that it would be convenient if the Stonehenge Tribunal stopped having functional Tribunal Meetings – that, they thought, would allow them to grow.

Now, having grown, they have to keep raiding, and are dependant upon the acquiescence or apathy of the other magi of the Tribunal to allow them to continue their campaigns. The greatest threat to their power, they think, is that if the Tribunal started to have regular meetings again, some motion might be passed demanding that they cease or scale back their operations. That would mean that they could maintain only a fraction of their grogs and ships, which in turn would mean only a fraction of the loot and vis required to satisfy the covenant's numerous magi.

Magi at Sanguis Vento

Life at Sanguis Vento is harsh. This is clearly true for their brutal and brutalized grogs, but for a mage conditions are also austere. The stronghold is not spacious, and when 200 people cram together here over winter it can seem claustrophobic. The lack of space means that magi must share laboratories. And although investment has been made in pragmatic effects to increase health (and benefit ageing rolls) - such as a Creo Ignem ritual that prevents the castle's rooms falling bellow a comfortable temperature, and a well equipped infirmary – no money has been spent on comfort or luxury.

Moreover, the organisation of the magi themselves is militaristic and unforgiving.

When the Covenant was founded, it was decided that in order to ensure that only the most committed, martial magi would join, a new member would be obliged to serve a ten year period in which they would have to do nothing but fight and serve the Covenant – no personal study time, no access to books unless mandated by the founders, etc. The leaders expected that they would mainly be fighting anyway, so this didn't seem like newcomers were being asked to do anything that the founders were not themselves willing to do. Over time, however, this has evolved into a four-tier hierarchy among the Covenant's 7-12 magi.

At any time, between zero and five “**Guest Members**” are associated with the covenant. Permitted only on the battlements and on one internal floor of the Covenant, they never see most of the building (they are barred from the Council chamber, library, treasury, etc.), but in any case are rarely even in the covenant fortress. Such temporary magi will often join for just a few seasons. They are, in effect, freelance combatants who join up

just for one raid or campaign. They are not allowed to keep any loot that they take on these raids (though they may receive gifts from the raids' leaders), when they join they must swear an oath that they will obey without question their battle commanders, they must accept that their commander may discipline them any way that she or he sees fit, and they can expect that they will spend much of their time sleeping on the freezing ground, getting seasick in the Baltic, and generally having a miserable time.

Yet for some young magi, just out of apprenticeship, the idea of getting some experience of battle at such a constantly belligerent covenant is extremely attractive. Young Flambeau, for example, training for fifteen years in Normandy, Rhine or Provance, being told that they will have to show restraint and avoid butchering the mundanes when they become full mages, may well chafe at the restrictions imposed by the code, and seek to start their career as magi with some danger, adventure, and the opportunity to unleash magical carnage as part of an effective, magical raiding party.

Likewise, many mid-sized Covenants looking to recruit new blood may be picky about who they recruit. And for them, an applicant who, though young, has real military experience in fully-fledged magical combat, might seem quite a catch. In other words, it is not only the most reckless or violent magi who would see an advantage in becoming Guest Members here. Many ambitious, disciplined magi with a martial streak – from Flambeau or other Houses – might see a stint on campaign with Sanguis Vento as a way to burnish their credentials and gain rare combat experience.

Most years there are no Guest Members. But some years a restless young mage or two – sometimes a whole group – will visit the Covenant to ask to become Guest Members for a summer, for a year, or for longer.

“**Aspirant Members**” are those who wish to become permanent members. At present there are three, all serving their ten years in which their duties for each season are dictated by the founders. Two of these are glory-seeking Flambeau magi, **Vitorius of Flambeau** and **Bors of Flambeau**; the third is a Bjornaer maga with a talent for guerrilla warfare, her heart-beast being a lynx, **Hljod of Bjornaer**. These are addressed with the title Commander – but all are aware that the same title is used to address the mundane sergeants who lead squads of grogs; until they have weathered ten years of campaigns, they are considered no more important than a veteran mundane.

There are two “**Full Members**” – that is, magi who survived the ten years as Aspirants and were invited to join permanently. The covenant's customs are that they must go to war on command, but are free to pursue their own studies. In practice this means something very different for each member. Newly promoted from Aspirant to Full Member, **Ligef Fulgure**, filia of Clementia, has inherited her parens's interest in Creo but has coupled it with her innate knack for Auram. She is a devastating foe in combat, and each year she is tasked with leading a raid. By contrast, instead of being ordered into battle, Sanguis Vento's founders usually order their longer-serving Full Member, **Longenius of Bonisagus**, to spend time investigating magical treasures recovered from the north. Longenius is delighted with this, as he joined Sanguis Vento specifically

because he wanted to investigate the magics of Scandinavia. Still, though Intellego and Vim are his best Arts he is no shy lab-dweller, and he thoroughly enjoyed the ten annual campaigns that he survived as an Aspirant. Magi of this rank are addressed as “Revered Commander”.

Two of the original “**Founder Members**” still live, the other three having been killed in battle. These two have no obligations imposed by the covenant, but they still work doggedly to build up the covenant’s power as well as their own. **Rastko Pokol of Flambeau** was the filius of a disgraced Flambeau who had Marches declared against him in both the Transylvanian and Thebes Tribunals. Having survived his master’s downfall he travelled far to the west, and with a knack for leadership he soon became the tactical commander of Sanguis Vento’s early raids. To an early interest in Perdo and Corpus he has also now added Creo, so that he is now also the mage responsible for crafting Longevity Rituals for the covenant’s magi. **Clementia de Verbrande of Flambeau** is appallingly mis-named, as there is nothing “clement” about her demeanour. On the surface she is a constantly angry Creo Ignem specialist, most of her skin disfigured by multiple layers of burning (most of it self-inflicted in close-quarters combat), but beneath that she is also the covenant’s strategic mastermind. Both live harsh lives, but with considerable power at their command, and both are, by passion and temperament, totally committed to maintaining the covenant’s aggressive policies. Within the covenant, everyone refers to these by the honorific “Supreme Commander”. Outsiders often doubt that two belligerent magi could cooperate when both are “supreme”, but in practice the two have established an easy division of power, with Rastko taking tactical leadership while Clementia provides strategic direction.

Three apprentices have been trained thus far. All became Aspirants after their Gauntlet, and the one who survived those violent years is now a Full Member. Both Clementia and Rastko currently have apprentices, and these youngsters are also expected to become Aspirants. Indeed, Sanguis Vento does not see training apprentices as being about grooming new members for the Order, so much as new champions for their covenant. It is unclear how the magi of Sanguis Vento would react if one of their apprentices were so disloyal as to seek an alternative path after passing their Gauntlet.

This Can’t Last

The magi of Sanguis Vento become more confident with each successive victory. Thirty years ago they raided little hamlets and fortresses, pilfered petty magic artefacts or occasional pawns of vis; they would hit a target, flee, and disappear. Over their years their targets and hauls grew richer, and they have returned time and again to the biggest prizes; this means that they are attacking stronger warlords, raiding the sites of Scandinavia’s more powerful sorcerers, and returning year after year to seize more.

For them, each victory seems to confirm their martial genius and inevitable rise. They look forward, very soon, to being considered an Autumn Covenant to rival Blackthorn. But their pride makes them blind to their likely fall.

Inevitably, harried targets want to strike back, and as Sanguis Vento has started to pick more consistently on the same more powerful marks that means that they are raising the ire of people who do actually have the resources to hit back at them.

A reckoning is coming. And when it comes, the violence will most likely catch up other members of the Order – meaning that these belligerent Flambeau will, most certainly, in the words of the code, have brought ruin upon their fellow magi.

Soon, Scandinavian sorcerers and warlords will sail south to avenge themselves on Sanguis Vento. The Flambeau magi here react by claiming that “The Order” itself is under attack, and they start to demand assistance and vis from other covenants in Stonehenge. A war that Sanguis Vento itself provoked now comes to Northumbria.

Sanguis Vento and Canon

Sanguis Vento is not drawn from any published Ars Magica supplement.

Keeping Control of the Tribunal

The Stonehenge Tribunal remains a peaceful place for magi to live, despite the lack of Tribunal Meetings, because it serves the purposes of its leading covenants to keep it peaceful. If the area were to descend into magical violence, then outsiders (Quaesitores and their Hoplites) would soon step in. When these covenants' priorities change, or when they lose the will or ability to keep control of the tribunal, then things could get much more dangerous and unstable. But for now, the Tribunal is subtly manipulated and coerced into a peace that serves the purposes of its leaders.

- Blackthorn avoids unwelcome investigations or rulings relating to its researches and questionable mage-killings.
- Stephanus at Burnham gets to enjoy the game of manipulating a whole Tribunal, like a spider who enjoys being at the centre of a web.
- The Chines avoids any ruling to remove their rights to many of the most powerful ancient magical sites in the Tribunal.
- Sanguis Vento face no censure for their reckless foreign escapades.

But how do these maintain this control?

Persuasion

Many magi in the Tribunal can easily be persuaded to stay away from Tribunal Meetings, allowing the leading covenants to avoid being challenged on their dubious past (Blackthorn), violences (Sanguis Vento) and privileges (The Chines).

- The Chines typically argues that magi are better off without regulations, bureaucrats, and committees – that magi should be free to do broadly what they want, to follow researches and pursue opportunities and live where they wish. (They half believe this. As peaceful scholars it is tempting to think that everyone can just get along if left alone. But mostly they are using the argument to avoid challenges to their own privileges. “Let everyone do what they want” is a self-serving argument when the person making it has so many existing advantages.)
- Stephanus muses thoughtfully about how some factions in the Order seem to want to create a bureaucracy that will stifle freedom, creativity, inventiveness and initiative. (He doesn't believe that. He just finds it a convenient argument. Unfortunately, there are magi, e.g. in House Guernicus, who are keen to have magi registered and catalogued, to use rulings of the Peripheral Code like weapons to tell people what they can and can't do, etc., and so it is easy for him to point at other Tribunals and portray their operations as being akin to dictatorship.) Hypocritically, he even points to the history of The Chines as an

example of why Tribunal Meetings are dangerous for magi – here, after all, is a covenant that was given the choicest magical sites in the whole Tribunal because their powerful friends connived to make it so (“and you’ve worked hard to find your vis sites – do you want a Tribunal Meeting taking them away to give them to their lackeys?”)

- Sanguis Vento, on the other hand, is unashamed in their arguments: Magi are powerful, and should be allowed to use that power. We are trained for war, and we will thrive through war! No cowardly lawyer or honey-tongued schemer should be given tools (like Tribunal Meetings) that do nothing but prevent magi from profiting from their power. (They believe this whole-heartedly. And the argument may seem alluring to magi who do not yet imagine that they could one day be on the receiving end of other magi unrestrainedly wielding their power.)

These arguments are contradictory and often disingenuous. They certainly gloss over how brutal things could get if magi chose to use these freedoms against each other. But for most magi in the Tribunal, these arguments are convincing enough.

The most common House in the Tribunal is Ex Miscellanea, many of whose members, suspicious of past schemes by powerful magi to use the Order against the less powerful, are very open to arguments that they should be left alone, in freedom. And many young, martial, confident or powerful magi can see the appeal of Sanguis Vento’s vision of magi allowed to exercise their power without oversight.

Wizards’ Wars

Sometimes those who are maintaining the status quo (Blackthorn, Burhnam, The Chines and Sanguis Vento) need to intervene to keep things running smoothly. This might mean preventing other magi from getting too aggressive and attracting the attention of Quaesitores from other Tribunals. Or it might mean foiling someone’s attempt to get more magi to a Tribunal meeting.

The main weapon that the conspirators have to threaten or chastise wayward magi is Wizards’ Wars. The code of the Order of Hermes allows a mage to declare against another magus (on the night of the full moon, to commence one month later and to last for one further month) a “War” during which the two combatants are not bound by the code. Most obviously this means they can kill each other. But it can also be taken to mean that they can scry on each other, deprive one and other of their magics (e.g. steal magical artefacts), and otherwise ignore the code. So Wars don’t have to be used to kill. They can be used to scry and to steal. And they can be declared simply to intimidate.

In order to declare a Wizard’s War, a mage is supposed to have a good reason. But who judges what is a “good” reason? And what is the difference between a genuine reason and a pretext? The main mechanism for chastising magi who declare questionable Wars is, of course, the seven-yearly Tribunal Meeting... but the Stonehenge Tribunal never

has quorate meetings, so who is going to hold someone to account for declaring unfounded wars?

Therefore, magi in the Stonehenge Tribunal have quite a lot of latitude in declaring Wars. Without anyone to scrutinise their declarations, they can usually find a plausible pretext. And with a little imagination an intelligent a mage will always be able to come up with a justification for a War that sounds plausible if not closely examined.

If the conspirators suspect that a mage is a troublemaker, then that most likely means that either they are disturbing the peace of the Tribunal (e.g. inflicting violence on other magi, or on mundanes in a way that might upset powerful mundanes and cause problems), stealing vis, or trying to get enough magi along to the Tribunal Meetings to make the next one quorate.

- For a violent / code-breaking mage, an easy Wizard's War pretext is: "I have evidence that you have breached the code, and for the good of the Order I will act to protect us all."
- For someone plundering vis sites: "You have been stealing the magical resources of other members of the Order, and for this I will hold you to account."
- For someone trying to get a quorate Meeting, a little more imagination might be required – e.g. speaking to them, and then declaring that the person is "obviously" a trouble-maker, spoke insultingly, etc.

The first step in dealing with a troublemaker is having someone declare a Wizard's War for the purposes of **gathering information and intimidating the target**. For this:

- A covenant other than Burnham (i.e. Blackthorn, The Chines, or Sanguis Vento) will arrange for an Intelligo specialist to declare a Wizard's War. They may not be so crass as to admit that they are "hiring" a mage like a common mercenary, but they will make a "gift" of vis to the Intelligo specialist, in "thanks" for "standing up for the interests of the Tribunal and the Order". (Yes, that means they hired the mage like a mercenary; but it all sounds more honourable this way, and allows for some plausible deniability.)
- The Intelligo specialist will declare the War, and then stay well out of the way of the target. At no point does the maga put herself at risk, but she will try to get information about how the target is guarded (what are the grog rotas and defences at the target's covenant?), what the locals think of them (are there any possible allies here should future actions be needed?)... and if possible will scry directly on the target. This is slightly dubious, as she may inadvertently end up scrying on other magi at the covenant, too, but then, there is nobody likely judge that that is a problem if there are no Tribunal Meetings.
- The Intelligo mage will deliver a report on the target to the covenant that hired her (i.e. Blackthorn, The Chines, or Sanguis Vento). That covenant will then share the report with Burnham, which will reimburse half the cost of the vis "given" (paid) to the mage (thus spreading the cost and also sharing the intelligence).
- The hope is that simply being the target of a War will intimidate the target into

better behaviour. But if it seems that the target needs things spelled out for them, or may not be suitably intimidated yet, then Blackthorn or Sanguis Vento might send them a message by redcap, requesting that the mage visits them to “discuss how you seem to have disturbed other members of the order, to clear up any misunderstandings, and to ensure that nobody will feel the need to declare further Wars.” The tone may be friendly, but any subsequent chat will make it very clear that further wars can be expected if the target continues to attack / thief from / annoy / insult / threaten / etc.

The next step up, if the troublemaker persists, is to declare a Wizard’s War for the purpose of **stealing from or kidnapping** the target.

- Gilbert Tacet from Burnham declares a War.
- With skills, experience and magics honed over several decades, he is one of the most capable magically-augmented thieves/spies in the Order. He is also informed by the reports from the previous intelligence-gathering War, and advised by the arch-schemer, Stephanus. So it is almost certain that he will be able to steal something from the target, or from the target’s sanctum.
- If the target is impenetrably fortified, Gilbert backs off (i.e. runs and hides for the duration of the War – he is no fighter.)
- If the target is merely well defended, Gilbert will be able to loot easily portable items from them or their sanctum. You may need to be inventive about how this works – but this is a super-thief advised by a genius schemer, so “inventive” is trivial for Gilbert.
- If the target is poorly defended, then Gilbert will probably steal not only all of the target’s easily portable treasures, and the target’s clothes, but also the actual target themselves.
- If the target lost an item or two, then after the War the Arch-Mage Stephanus will send a letter to the effect of “this is all getting a bit out of hand – why don’t you drop in to my hall in Burnham for a few days and we’ll have a chat about how we can sort this out”.
- If Gilbert actually kidnaps the target, then the target wakes up a few days after the War ends in the dungeons of the Earl of Norfolk, with a friendly, smiling Stephanus telling the guard “there, you see, I told you I could wake your guest”, and the guard grovelling “I’m terribly sorry my lord, we had no idea this was a friend of yours...”
- Whether invited, or escorted after being released, the target may then find themselves in Burnham having a delicious, civilised dinner with a charming Staphanus. Stephanus’s approach here is to make it clear what the mage needs to do to stop people declaring Wars, and also to make it clear that a failure to desists will lead to things getting much, much worse. He can be charming, but he also has the bargaining leverage that he can “have a word with Gilbert” about returning the mage’s stolen possessions. In other words, if the target swears to stop their unacceptable behaviour, then they can have their stuff back; otherwise, the next War will almost certainly kill them.

Persuasion and peace are preferred. (Dead bodies leave vengeful friends behind, and that gets messy.) But if the conspirators are faced by a truly unrelenting troublemaker they may decide to kill the target. This doesn't require any sort of conspiratorial conversation – it would involve Stephanus having a quiet chat with the magi at Sanguis Vento and them coming to the conclusion, all by themselves, that they should get rid of the troublemaker. (Stephanus is the master of quiet chats and nudging people to come up with the ideas that he wants them to come up with.) At this point, the unfortunate mage is going to face an **intentionally lethal Wizard's War** declared by one or several experienced magi from Sanguis Vento, the Tribunal's foremost martial covenant.

Tribunal Meetings

Despite the arguments and persuasion, the threats and intimidation, it is still possible that magi will, annoyingly, try to attend the Tribunal Meeting. If they do then a Meeting might be quorate, which could inconvenience the Tribunal's leading covenants. So they all take steps to ensure the Tribunal is not attended by the necessary twelve-or-more mage from four-or-more covenants.

First, magi who have shown an interest in attending the Tribunal Meeting might be bribed to do something else instead. There is nothing so crass as a cash payment on offer. But magi can be lured with something that might appeal to them more than a Meeting. A magus from The Chines might invite scholarly folk to visit at a time that coincides with the Tribunal Meeting, to discuss a new tractatus which they might be interested in; heading to The Chines for a couple of evenings of scholarly discussion, and then leaving with a copy of a freshly scribed tractatus on Magic Theory, might tempt some. Or a warlike mage might be invited to join Sanguis Vento on a raid with offers of a share in some intriguing loot.

Second, the letter sent out inviting magi to the Meeting makes it clear that the gathering probably won't be quorate, but that the journey might be dangerous. Many waverers might read it and think “on reflection, I won't bother.”

Third, approaching Blackthorn is not entirely safe. Blackthorn certainly does NOT encourage the locals to harass visiting magi (that would be too blatant a violation of the code) but equally it doesn't do much to calm the locals' suspicions. And for petty lordlings and frightened peasants who still remember being raided by magic-wielding “bandits” from Tagelyn, groups of weird looking strangers might seem alarming. If visiting magi were seized by suspicious locals and hurled into a marcher lord's prison-pit, then the magi of Blackthorn may not get around to securing their release until after the Tribunal Meeting had finished.

Fourth, in the week before and after the Meeting, immediately outside the doors of Blackthorn is a camp of seasoned warriors, armed and ready for war, with a Flambeau banner flying above their command post. Their commander greets visitors almost aggressively. “Who are you? Hmm. You look like trouble-makers to me – and I'm a great

judge of character. We don't want trouble-makers here – why don't you just turn around and go home.” She doesn't expect anyone who has travelled so far to actually turn around, but when they insist on proceeding she will note “so as well as obviously being scoundrels, you now ignore my wise advice? I am insulted. Very insulted! How long is it until the next full moon...?” (She has no intention of declaring a Wizard's War, but she is keen to intimidate visitors – maybe they'll remember that in seven years when they are considering whether or not to attend the next Meeting.) Being intimidated by the Revered Commander Ligeſ Fulgure ex Flambeau of Sanguis Vento is not fun.

Finally, once the visitors get into Blackthorn (where the welcome is quite friendly, and food and accommodation adequate), when they are invited to the great hall (cavern) for the start of the Tribunal Meeting, they might be disappointed by the number of attendees present.

- At a table at the head of the room sit two aged magi, Iudicium (the presiding Quaesitor) and Talion (the Praeco). Two tables flank the room with enough seating for 40, but only two other figures are seated there.
- Fornax ex Tremere of Blackthorn sits close to Talion (just to make the point that the presiding magi are not impartial), with all of the available Sigils of Blackthorn's magi laid out on the table before her.
- Hawys the Widow sits half way down one of the tables, feeling awkward to be in such august company, as the official representative of the redcaps.
- Nobody comes in from the Sanguis Vento camp outside (if asked, Ligeſ says she has “more important things to do” – i.e. training with her men).
- Unless someone has done a phenomenal job rallying other magi to attend, the meeting will not have enough attendees to be valid.
- At this point IF his presence will not change whether or not the Tribunal is quorate, Stephanus of Tylalus wanders in with a cup of wine in one hand and in the other a bundle containing an uncertain number of Sigils (which he drops on the table as he takes his seat with a nonchalant sense of, hey, I've got a ton of Sigils here, but let's not make a big deal of it.) “Hello everyone – sorry I'm a bit late – lovely to see some new faces,” he smiles.
- IF the Meeting is going to be quorate anyway, then Ligeſ will attend, probably to spend the evening glaring at any unwelcome newcomers, possibly thinking up reasons to declare a Wizard's War on whoever managed to persuade so many magi to attend.

What Blackthorn, Burnham, The Chines and Sanguis Vento are trying to do is give the impression that it isn't worth bothering to come to the Meeting.

But even if the Meeting were held then three allied magi would have vast voting power. Likely votes: Fornax, 7 (all of Blackthorn's); Stephanus, at least 8 (Burnham and The Chines); Ligeſ, 7 (Sanguis Vento). That is at least 22 votes that could be used to derail any serious challenge to the privileges or investigations into the behaviours of the dominant covenants.

From Indicium, humble follower of Guernicus, to all magi of the Stonehenge Tribunal, offering most fraternal greetings, in friendship and solidarity through all our travails.

As senior Quaesitor within the Tribunal of Stonehenge, I write to all to confirm that under Hermetic Law the maga Immanola Ex Miscellanea has the right to act as Praeco and host of the seven-yearly Tribunal Meeting. Should she exercise that right, as she has chosen not to for many years now, then of course the Meeting will take place at Cad Gadu, and I shall be honoured to officiate there as Quaesitor.

In the event that Immanola does not duly circulate her intent to host the Meeting, then to ensure that such a Meeting might take place, be it hereby known that the leader of the Covenant of Blackthorn, Talion of Tremere, being next in seniority of age after Immanola Ex Miscellanea, shall host the meeting.

Therefore, all such plans to be superseded by any lawful plan of Immanola Ex Miscellanea, it is expected that the meeting shall take place at dusk on midsummer's night in the year of the lord twelve hundred, in the great hall at Blackthorn.

Those unfamiliar with the approach to the Covenant of Blackthorn should note the following. The locals have become wary of magi, due to the depredations of previous criminal elements (thankfully, that matter now having been resolved), and they may be easily provoked to hostility. It is advisable to stay on the roads, so that they do not consider you suspicious. Should you be challenged, it should be sufficient to say that you are visiting Talion of Blackthorn and that he is expecting you. In the event that the locals do detain you, be assured that the Covenant of Blackthorn will swiftly negotiate your release without bloodshed. Be especially careful not to engage the locals in combat at this time, lest this bring the wrath of the mundanes upon other members of the Order who may be travelling through the area. Violent interactions with the local mundanes may be taken as indicative of an intent to disrupt the due processes of the Tribunal.

It is understood that on recent occasions an insufficient number of magi have attended for any decisions of the Meeting to be binding. Once again, if, as seems likely, the Meeting remains inquorate then no valid decisions will be made on any matters. But, in accordance with Hermetic Law, the meeting will none the less be held, lest sufficient magi do, indeed, attend.