

The Mead Hall

(*Shaun Hately*)

The Mead Hall (properly named The Axe of God) is a tavern that lies between The Sheath and Limits Lane in Ongus' Bridgewater Ward. It is notable as a favoured drinking haunt of visitors to the city from Thuland and Mercania, and even further afield – a place without the airs and graces of so-called civilization where a warrior can get a good drink without having to worry about offending some knight who thinks that manners makyth more of you than strength of arms alone. As the name implies, good, solid, strong mead is the drink of choice in this place but ale is available for those who want it, and you can get wine as long as you do not treat it as anything more fancy than a way to get yourself drunk.

Eirik Bearbane, of Mercanian extraction, is the proprietor. Now elderly, he claims to have travelled the world as a younger man but denies that he ever participated in raids on Ellesland – at least he denies it while sober. He opened his tavern about ten years ago, purchasing two neighbouring buildings and knocking a door between them. One of the old buildings comprises the common hall of his tavern, which has a hearth at its centre surrounded by wooden tables and chairs, whilst in one corner a long bench served as a bar. The walls are painted with murals depicting snow-capped mountains and the sky above, and the ceiling is also painted to resemble the night sky with its constellations, but this is all difficult to see as the atmosphere is dark and smoky – Bearbane blocked up all the windows and the central fire can only vent its smoke through a hole in the roof above. Heavy rain has been known to extinguish the fire. Barrels of mead, ale, and cheap wine can be found behind the bar.

The second building has a storeroom (likely used to store even more mead) and three small private rooms that can be occupied by those willing to pay – the rest of the space is a common room where patrons of the tavern can sleep on the floor at night if they choose, or for a small fee can hire one of the cots stacked in the corner. No staff stay on the premises overnight unless they are still tending the bar – Eirik himself has a house in a nearby street.

One of the city's ancient public latrines is almost across the road from the front of the tavern and its proximity means that Eirik has felt no need to provide any such facility himself.

This is a place for drinking, not for fine dining, but a cauldron of stew is kept on the fire as part of the tradition of stone soup common in Ongus.

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