

Stephen Walsh

Stephen Walsh studied Illustration at the North East Wales Institute under the tutelage of renowned Welsh artist Keith Bowen. His final project, *The Mermaid*, based upon a book by Rosemary Sutcliffe, was supervised by Alan Lee. Stephen has worked as a professional illustrator since graduating in 1988. He has illustrated a variety of books and games, including the award winning *Settlers of Catan*. His projects include many Tolkien inspired watercolours such as *Barad-dûr* and *Spiders and Flies* for the Middle Earth Collectable Card game by Iron Crown Enterprises. His watercolour *Carn Dûm* was published by Harper Collins in *The Lord of the Rings Postcard* collection. The acclaimed Italian exhibition *Images of Middle Earth* also featured several of Stephen's Tolkien pieces. Stephen is fascinated by historical subjects and has recently illustrated many titles for Osprey Publishing. His large scale battle scenes include *Otterburn 1388* and *Seven Days Battle 1862*.



August 13th -15th, 2010

at Pafiliwn Bont, Pontrhydfendigaid,
Ystrad Meurig, Ceredigion, SY25 6BB
Freefone 0800 6125469

Email info@festivalintheshire.com

www.FestivalintheShire.com



Barad Dur suggests an ancient structure added to over centuries of occupation. Like an anthill, it emerges over time, a mass of masonry built up in lots of levels. Industrialisation is seen as a dark force, the iron bridge in the foreground is cast in a smoky Gothic landscape, the muted colours reflecting the dark satanic mills. I took inspiration from Victorian Gothic structures like Saint Pancras Station, to create a kind of super-Gothic that reflects the evil machinations of the machine-like, worker-ant Orcs.

Spiders and Flies is an attempt to disorientate the viewer, for this reason the image is often hung upside down. In the watercolour I play with the viewers' perceptions to suggest the terror and confusion of the captive hobbits. Gone is the lush green of the Shire, replaced with the deep blue of



the thick ever-midnight forest. The branches of the prison tree are bare and withered, leafless, their colour a lifeless rotted grey. The hobbits in this scene, hung upside down, menaced by the enormous spider are shrouded, their forms already obscure, suggesting death and decay. It is a moment of tension, the spider about to strike.

Carn Dum was published by HarperCollins in their *Lord of the Rings Postcard Book*. It depicts the Witch King at his capital Angmar. The imposing oriental tower in background is based upon Tibetan monasteries, looming high above the mists. The inspiration for the Witch King's armour comes from Medieval Gothic armour complete with great helm. His pose is commanding, a monarch surveying his realm. In this composition, the Witch King's form is echoed by the

imposing tower behind him. The clouds gathering over clear sky, are intended to give the idea of an encroaching evil, the situation mirrored in the weather.



Balrog is an unpublished piece, originally painted as a sample piece for Iron Crown. It depicts the dramatic moment where the Balrog emerges from a curtain of fire, leaping over a flaming fissure in a single bound. Although the debate surrounding whether or not Balrogs have wings is heated, I included them because I found the form aesthetically pleasing, and I wanted to convey the idea of a fallen beast with echoes of Milton's Lucifer. However, the demon's wings are paralysed, useless, which is why he can fall. My interpretation is more human looking than others because in the text the Balrog is described as manlike.



Nature's Revenge depicts the moment where an Ent, bursts through the Orc-made heavy wooden fortress door at Isengard: wood against wood. The structure splinters and fractures; its solidity no match for Nature. The iron bolts give way easily. I saw the Ent as a fusion of tree and man, an exact synergy of the two forms, his torso, trunk like, his mossy biceps muscled like a man's, his hair and beard, twig like profusions, his claw like fingers, sharp as thorns. In the background a rigid army of Ents stands in the mists ready to follow the Ent into battle.



Marsh Drake takes place in the withered flatlands, the reeds in the foreground are spindly and grey, nothing wholesome survives in this featureless landscape. The Predator strikes, in one fluid lunge, barely disturbing the water. The acid green venom billows, silencing the knight's scream which is carried away by the poisonous cloud. The Marsh Drake's horns stab at the sky. So unexpected is the attack, the knight's blood red shield drops, useless, his sword falls from his hand, impotent. The knight becomes statuary, a figure frozen in time, as the stone victim on a carved relief.



Sarn Goriwing surges from the spray of the waterfall, an Orc monolith in stone, above a ford. I took my inspiration for this piece from the majestic Breton Mehirs, impossibly tall and imposing. Sarn Goriwing seems formed from the landscape, almost by erosion, it is the same colour as the sandstone cliffs that bank the river, and out of the top a tree springs like the Gothic picturesque ruins of old. But look carefully and there are signs of occupation, those dark slits are windows, not fissures. It is a place with something to hide at once camouflaged and imposing. The waterfall is a violent swirling moat, suggesting impregnability: the oppressively thick forest of Mirkwood both a curtain and a shield. The sky is ominous, the clouds lowering; despite its hidden location, trouble resides at Sarn Goriwing.

