

The History of Dire's Deep

The following information represents the entirety of what is known about Dire's Deep outside of the Dwarf Clan who built it in those ancient days. Some details of this are Wizard Guild secrets protected by the Shroud Of Augury and the Sentinels of the Art.

YOUR EYES ONLY – THIS INFORMATION IS “NEED TO KNOW” STATUS ONLY!

Dire's Deep was a Hold created by the **Stalmar Clan** about 63 years ago. It was the brainchild of **Targan Dire**, the leader of a group of like-minded people who wanted to make a Hold devoted to the pursuit of greater magical development of crafting. The initial founders consisted of Dwarves of the Stalmar Clan as well as a Gnome Tinker and a Human devotee of The Huntress, who served as the colonists' guide and protector until the Hold was underway. It took over six years of activity for the dozens of families to build the Hold and it was the pinnacle of design at the time, incorporating as many features as the Dwarves could put into it for their protection. The Tinker also helped them design innovative structures and security.

The Hold opened itself for business for many years until strange events began to occur. No one was quite sure what lead to the events, but the Hold began to get fearful. Outsiders were not able to discern much about the nature of these events, as they occurred only to people of the Hold, and Dwarven pride and secrecy prevented them from disclosing many details for fear of exposing weakness. The Hold dealt with matters on their own – until the deaths started.

52 years ago, the beginnings of a long period of murders began. They started as isolated and well-concealed from outsiders, but soon the Dwarves could not conceal the brutal murders of their citizens from outsiders anymore. Shame and fear flooded the Hold, and Targan Dire finally closed the Hold to outsiders 49 years ago. The Dwarves of the Hold tried to remain in the Hold for as long as they could, but Targan's death 48 years ago finally caused the Clan to abandon the Hold altogether. Ru Wardens aided in quelling the riots caused by the panicked Dwarves trying to flee the Hold. The Doors to the Hold were shut and the island declared cursed by the Guild of Shipping and Trade. Since that time, it has been considered a haunted island and a place of death.

It is appropriate that it was the site of the Battle of Dire's Deep during the end of the war with the Elves. A little over a year ago, at the tail end of the War, the Elf forces swarmed to the island to seize it and, Gnomish Command assumed, to use it as a base of operations in the Southern Isles. A fleet was dispatched to prevent that from occurring. While the Gnomes did not expect the Elves to use the Hold, due to their disdain for underground living spaces, they did fear that the Elves would either discover Dwarf and Gnome devices in the Hold, upon exploration, or worse – bind and command whatever forces lead to the abandonment of the Hold.

The two fleets clashed mightily upon a storm-tossed sea outside the hold's docks with many ships lost to the fury of the storm itself. Some say the storm seemed to be reaching out to kill both the Elf and Dwarf fleets like a thing unleashed from Hell. Some say it was just a bad storm – get over it. Forced to beach their ships to survive the waves, the remains of both fleets began a skirmish on the beaches of the island that lasted for several hours into the stormy night. In that skirmish, the Hammer of Throned, symbol of Dwarven Majesty and tool of the **Dwarven Defender-Lord Karim Foeaxe**, was lost with his death.

Neither side's fleets ever returned from that place. A single human survivor of the fleet, **Darus Moint**, was picked up days later. He required considerable healing of the mind before he could speak about the events, so little is known of what occurred that ill-fated night. Moint did say that *something* came and took the Hammer after the battle was done, but he saw nothing of it, as he was laying on the battlefield with a serious wound when the terror came. When the Dwarf sailors rallied to reclaim their racial artifact from the *something*, they were killed by a swarm of black, twisted arrows. This description was consistent with the remains observed from the rescuing scout ship. This interview was kept secret by the Wizard's Guild.

Many thought the Hammer lay upon the shores somewhere, and some Dwarves were even brave enough to go to the island to see – some came back, some didn't. The Wizard's Guild has searched the island using powerful spells and found that the Hammer is there – only it is deep within the Hold somewhere, where the Seeking Eyes of their Shroud of Augury, the clandestine intelligence and prophesy arm of the Guild, cannot reach it.

They have dispatched an agent to recover it...