



# Event Descriptions

## Digital Recovery:

"The many ways we find Faërie online and regain a clear view from virtual communities and online fandom."

# Keynote Speakers

## The Patterns and Promise of Fandom Communities: Re-Enchantment in 2021

### **Amy H. Sturgis**

By gathering together online, by forging a digital fellowship, we are both blazing new trails and also following in the best traditions of fandom. Join Dr. Sturgis as she explores how fandom emerged in times of upheaval and uncertainty similar to today – and how current online communities are evolving to meet our need for Recovery and Re-enchantment in the 2020s.

**Bio:** Amy H. Sturgis earned her Ph.D. in Intellectual History from Vanderbilt University and specializes in Science Fiction/Fantasy/Gothic and Indigenous American Studies. She serves as contributing staff for the Hugo Award-winning *StarShipSofa* podcast and Editor in Chief for *Hocus Pocus Comics*.

*Dr. Sturgis is the author of four books and over sixty essays; she has earned honors for her scholarship (from The Northeast Tolkien Society) and journalism (from the Los Angeles Press Club). She is also the editor of six books and one magazine issue; the latter, Apex Magazine's "A Celebration of Indigenous American Fantasists," produced the winner of the 2018 Hugo Award and Nebula Award for Best Short Story.*

*Dr. Sturgis lives with her husband in the Appalachian highlands in Virginia. Her official website is amyhsturgis.com.*

## "All of them at Once!": Recovering in, with, from, and thanks to J.R.R. Tolkien

### **Michael D.C. Drout**

Discover how Tolkien's philological skills enabled him to recover information about the past; and, from that, to create art that allows us to recover our hope and joy even in the bleakest of times.

**Bio:** Michael D.C. Drout is Professor of English and Director of the Center for the Study of the Medieval at Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts, where he teaches classes in Old and Middle English, Writing, Linguistics, Science Fiction and the works of J.R.R. Tolkien.

*Drout is the author of How Tradition Works, Tradition and Influence in Anglo-Saxon Literature, Drout's Quick and Easy Old English, and How to Think: the Liberal Arts and their Enduring Value, and he is co-author of Beowulf Unlocked: New Evidence from Lexomic Analysis. He edited J.R.R. Tolkien's Beowulf and the Critics and the J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia and co-edited Transitional States: Cultural Change, Tradition and Memory in Medieval England. He is one of the founders of the journal Tolkien Studies, for which he has co-edited 16 volumes. Drout has published over fifty journal articles and books chapters on topics ranging from Beowulf, to digital humanities and math in science fiction, to Anglo-Saxon medical remedies.*

*Drout lives in Dedham, Massachusetts with his wife, Raquel, daughter, Rhys, son, Mitchell, and corgis, Lancelot and Percival.*

# Special Guests

## **Discussion on the Popularity of Old Norse Mythology as a Resource for Modern Fantasy**

### ***Tom Shippey***

Why has Old Norse mythology proved such a popular resource for writers of modern fantasy? Tom Shippey aims to answer the question by looking at more than forty works written since the 1940s, and also show what different strategies writers have used.

## **"Forth now, and fear no darkness!": Reflections on the Tolkien Fandom Oral History Project at Marquette University**

### ***William Fliss***

Marquette University, home to the original manuscripts for J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, has embarked on an ambitious project to gather 3-minute testimonials from 6,000 Tolkien fans, one for each Rider of Rohan that Théoden led to the aid of Gondor. Participants are invited to respond to three questions: When did you first encounter the works of Tolkien? Why are you a fan? What has he meant to you? Marquette's Tolkien Archivist, William Fliss, will describe his experiences building the collection and share what he has learned about Tolkien fandom having now interviewed the first 600 amazing fans.

# Social Events

## Friday:

### **Pub Quiz:**

Welcome to the Prancing Pony, where the good stuff comes in pints - and you might need it for this, the first ever Prancing Pony Podcast Pub Trivia Quiz. Questions will span a wide variety of topics within Middle-earth, from the books to the movies, *The Silmarillion* to the Appendices, and there are even some from the podcast's Digressions. So pull up a chair, grab a pint, and have fun!

Please note, you will need a separate device to respond to the questions, and we recommend grabbing your favorite pair of headphones or earbuds - especially if you are participating as a team.

### **The Common Room - Happy Hour:**

While the presentations are tremendous, and the social events are hilarious and inspirational in measure, sometimes it is nice to just hang out and chat (or listen if that is your wont). Join us in one of the social rooms, whether that's sitting 'round the fire, talking over a pint or two around a table or at the bar, or even brooding quietly in the corner with a pipe. You may even catch a glimpse of the Lord of the Mark or Man of the West - perhaps both at the same time!

### **Hall of Fire - Poetry Reading:**

As Elrond's folk gathered in the Hall of Fire to hear poetry and song, the TCBS gathered at Barrow's Stores to share poetry and fellowship, so do we invite you to join us for the Hall of Fire Poetry Reading at the inaugural Prancing Pony Podcast Digital Moot. Come sit and listen, bring your own poems based on The Legendarium, or read your favorite selection from The Professor's works. We can't think of anything "more Tolkien" than reading and discussing poetry together!

### **Virtual Scavenger Hunt:**

Help! Important items have gone missing from Middle-earth, and we need your help finding them. There will be five rounds, each consisting of 10 minutes. You will need to find as many of the items within the allotted time for each round. You can use your own interpretation of the items. First one back for each round gets three points, then one point for each item found; judge may award up to five bonus points for creativity or interpretation or being as close to the mark as possible.

## **Saturday:**

### **The Common Room - Happy Hour:**

While the presentations are tremendous, and the social events are hilarious and inspirational in measure, sometimes it is nice to just hang out and chat (or listen if that is your wont). Join us in one of the social rooms, whether that's sitting 'round the fire, talking over a pint or two around a table or at the bar, or even brooding quietly in the corner with a pipe. You may even catch a glimpse of the Lord of the Mark or Man of the West - mayhaps both at the same time!

### **Escape the Barrow:**

Have you ever wanted to experience the creepiness that is the Barrow-Downs? Have you wanted to participate in a tabletop RPG campaign with a fellowship of members of the Prancing Pony Podcast community? If so, join us in escaping Barry Wight and the Barrows. The catch? Try to do it in only one hour.

The event will take place Saturday, May 15th at 10:00PM EST. Once you register, you will be offered a selection of pre-made adventurers from one of the Free Peoples of Middle-earth (on a first come, first served basis). So, bring your favorite earphones, a good dice app (we recommend RPG Simple Dice for Android devices and Mighty Dice for Apple devices) or your own physical dice, and your character sheet.

### **Finrod-Sauron Epic Pun Battle:**

The Lay of Leithian. Such beautiful, riveting verse...Well this isn't that. Bring your best (worst), facepalming, door-slapping puns to this open-mic pun off, hosted by Becca Davis and Arthur Harrow.

# Saturday Presentations:

## Gondor Track:

### Collector's Corner

#### ***Chad High, Jeremy Edmonds and Andrew Ferguson***

Join Jeremy Edmonds, Andrew Ferguson, and Chad High of Tolkienguide.com, who will be hosting an event with collectors showcasing some of their favorite, unusual, precious, and noteworthy items of their collections. All are welcome!

#### **"Keep up your hobbitry in heart": Finding Community in Crisis and Separation**

#### ***Adam Tyler***

In times of crisis, the need for relational connection to find escape, recovery, and consolation increases, even when a crisis like COVID-19 forces those connections into virtual spaces. Exploring J.R.R. Tolkien's use of correspondence in times of crisis can help his fans understand the promise and the limitations of virtual engagement and other non-physical forms of connection, and encourage ways to use digital methods of communication to keep up "hobbitry-at-heart" in the midst of physical isolation and catastrophe.

**Bio:** Adam Tyler lives in rural Appomattox, Virginia, with his wife Cadance and two young children. A pastor by trade and historian by training, Adam discovered Tolkien's writings in college and has voraciously read them ever since. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Adam decided to explore Tolkien and his work from a more scholarly perspective, enrolling in the Tolkien Studies certificate program through Signum University and connecting with the wider Tolkien community through social media.

#### **"Tolkieniani Italiani": New digital voices to meet Tolkien in Italy**

#### ***Enrico Spadaro***

The project "Tolkieniani Italiani" gathers Tolkien scholars and associations in Italy. Their greatest initiative is a web live radio, "Radio La voce di Arda", where Tolkien is greeted, shared, discussed, analysed and commented.

**Bio:** Enrico Spadaro is a young Italian researcher with a passion for J.R.R. Tolkien. Born in Catania (Italy) in 1991, at 10 years of age, when he watched Peter Jackson's adaption of *The Fellowship of the Rings* he fell in love with Tolkien. Thus, he started studying foreign languages and literatures at university. He is currently a member of the Italian group "Tolkieniani Italiani", that analyses and comments Tolkien's themes and works. He also works as a freelance translator.

## **Is Social Media our version of the Palantír? If so, who is on the other end?**

### **Robert Albright**

One of the most fascinating inventions in Tolkien's legendarium is the palantír. The palantíri gave their masters (users) the ability to see things far off, as well as the ability to communicate with users of other palantíri. These capabilities were of great utility, but despite their original intention, Sauron was able to put the palantír to evil use when he obtained the Minas Ithil stone. This paper will take a look at a comparison between the palantíri and modern technology, including current use and their original intended purpose. We each have choices regarding the information we take in. We can choose to focus on the wholesome and positive, such as The Prancing Pony Podcast, or we can allow ourselves to be influenced by the real-life internet trolls and sketchy social media algorithms. It's a choice of becoming either the kindly Mr. Rogers, or that angry man who screams at kids to "get off my lawn". Gandalf said it best, "Perilous to us all are the devices of an art deeper than we possess ourselves."

**Bio:** Robert is a 55 year-old guy living in Houston, Texas, who works for a software company that is based in Austin. He was introduced to Tolkien by his sister, to whom he is forever indebted. He has been reading and re-reading Tolkien's works since he was about 12 years old. His hobbies include photography, making sawdust in the garage, and running. He and his girlfriend have 3 cats, not a one of whom is named Tevildo.

## **Digital Recovery and Virtual Holidays in Faërie**

### **Dani Inkpen**

In 1964, Marshall MacLuhan famously proclaimed, "The medium is the message." In this paper, Dani Inkpen asks: what happens to our understanding of digital recovery when we take seriously this foundational insight of media studies? What, if anything, is different about digital engagement with Faërie?

**Bio:** Dani is a lover of Tolkien, snow, and all things montane. Born in western Canada, she has lived all over Canada and in several the states, chasing a career in academia. Trained as a historian of science at Harvard University, she is currently a professor at Cape Breton University in Nova Scotia where she teaches courses on the histories of science, the environment, and cold places. She lives in a house that backs onto woods and fields with her man, her baby, her dog, and her sourdough starter. This will be her first moot.

## **Education and Computers and the Cottage of Lost Play**

### **Elise Trudel Cedeño & James Tauber**

The crisis of COVID-19 plunged many workers and teachers into a difficult, uncharted world. The remote working environment brought new challenges in communication and collaboration. Two friends, a computational philologist and a literacy teacher, separated by two continents and the entire Pacific Ocean, found their way to Faerie when they discovered that they could bring their disparate skills together to examine Tolkien's works and create new ways to analyze and teach these texts.

**Bios:** Elise Trudel Cedeño is an online literacy educator, curriculum developer, and independent scholar of fantasy literature. She works with parents and teachers to develop literacy-based curriculum materials and alternative homeschooling options for children of all ages. James Tauber is a philologist, linguist, and software developer who works with scholars around the world using computers to better understand languages and texts.

## **"A little nudge out of the door": A Catalyst for Adventure**

### **Calvin Barbee**

Just as Gandalf's actions thrust Bilbo out the door on an adventure of a lifetime, so too were generations of readers. This paper seeks to further understand the catalyst of escapism, the benefits that develop from both a love of texts, and the digital communities that unite behind that shared love.

**Bio:** *Calvin B. Barbee is a Graduate Student of Late Medieval and Early Modern European History at Northern Illinois University. During his time at NIU, his works have ranged from analyzing Arthurian literature, medieval tournaments, and the urbanization of the sport; however, his recent works have led him to studying quality of life in the seventeenth century, and how climate played a role in the daily lives of those living across the British Isles.*

## **A Hobbit Door: An Architectural Analysis**

### **Jon Nelson**

Join me for a discussion in which we will compare and contrast the workings of a true-to-legends Shire hobbit door, several real-world applications, and what one might plan for if one wanted a hobbit door of their own.

**Bio:** *Jon Nelson discovered Tolkien's works as a child, being read LOTR and the Hobbit by my parents. I read Silmarillion in Junior High, and Enjoyed the Peter Jackson Films soon after. I've always been interested in Art, Fine Arts, and Science, but have had a knack only more for Drawing and Math. I became an Architectural Draftsman after a 2yr college degree, and later became more involved on the design end of things, doing residential, commercial, and community buildings. I currently work for an Architect in Northern Minnesota. I discovered Prancing Pony Podcast after switching to a 25 minute commute when I started to enjoy more audiobooks and podcasts. Thanks to your 'more in-depth dive for the casual nerd'... I've been able to rekindle my love for Tolkien's work, and dive further into the Author that sparked my nerd-dom.*

## **PPP LIVE! An Ask Me Anything-style recording**

### **Alan & Shawn**

In an ancient moot tradition going all the way back to the time of the Lamps (or maybe just 2018), Alan and Shawn are recording an episode of the PPP live at the first-ever PPP Moot! Join us in this session to ask us any questions you want — anything, from "What are your favorite pizza toppings?" to "Where do baby Wargs come from?" — and then brag to your friends when the episode comes out the weekend after the moot! It's like a great big, extra-special, troll-sized Questions After Nightfall! (Hopefully with no actual trolls.)

## **Come sit a while, talk with friends, and recover your strength**

### **The Friends of Mr. Underhill Smial**

The Friends of Mr. Underhill, of Houston, Texas Tolkien Society, present to you a discussion on friendship, togetherness, and recovery in Tolkien's writing. We encourage you to come and spend some time with our group and friends, recover your strength and bring your favorite passages about this topic to read and talk about.

## Rohan Track:

### In Defense of Tauriel: My Journey from Tolkien Purist to Tolkien Fan

#### Laurie Magan

A brief presentation centering on how one controversial film character demonstrates the ways that various new media (film, gaming, podcasting) can not only bring new readers to the Tolkien legendarium, but also ultimately turn Tolkien purists into Tolkien fans.

**Bio:** *Laurie has been a lover of all things Tolkien since age 9 when she first read The Hobbit. She is lucky enough to be able to work from home and is currently pursuing a post-graduate degree in Medieval Literature. When not reading Chaucer, she divides her free time between studying The Professor's works, accompanying her husband on falconry outings, and playing with her cats in a two-story yurt on the Olympic Peninsula in WA State.*

### The Importance of Online Fandom to Recovery

#### Zara Williams

For Tolkien, writing fantasy fiction allowed him to rationalise his experience of loss, his engagement with Faërie facilitating his exploration of grief and his understanding of Recovery; as readers of his work we are allowed these opportunities, and gain similar ones when we engage with online fandom. This paper discusses the value of engaging with online fanfiction communities and social media discussions of fandom in coping with and Recovering from trauma and the "rawness and ugliness" of life.

**Bio:** *Zara Williams (they/them) is a twenty-something queer poet and storyteller based in Scotland. They were the winner of the non-fiction segment of L'Èphemère Review's Inaugural Writing Awards, and through them published their debut chapbook, We Begin In The Dark. They have also published work with Mineral Lit Mag, Corvid Queen, and The Rising Phoenix Review. A postgrad student of Medieval Literatures and Cultures at The University of Edinburgh, they have a fascination with stories, and all things magical and dusty. You can observe their stream of consciousness in real time on Twitter or Instagram @zdeawilliams.*

### Community and Subcreation in Tolkien Fanart and Fanfiction

#### Becca Davis

This roundtable is a discussion of creative events in the virtual Tolkien community and how they not only create community, but facilitate the act of subcreation as well. Art and writing exchanges, such as the Tolkien Reverse Summer Bang and the Tolkien Secret Santa, bring fans of the Professor together from all over the world to collaborate and share their thoughts and ideas about Legendarium characters

### Held in High Honor: The Role of Gardens in the Recovery of Middle-earth

#### Becca Davis

This paper examines the role of gardens and gardeners in the recovery of Middle-earth during the events of The Lord of the Rings, with a specific focus on The Return of the King. Specific focus is paid to Sam's role and power as a gardener in the recovery of the Shire after the scouring and the role that gardens play in the physical and mental recovery of Eowyn and Faramir.

**Bio:** *Known as BarliBecca and the PPP Queen of Puns, Becca is an instructor at Murray State College by day and by night keeps a certain mailbag and innkeeper in order. An early career academic, Becca's research interests are in the work of J.R.R. Tolkien, the use of fanfiction as a reader response, Old English, folklore, and fantasy literature; her master's thesis examined the subversion of the roles of hero, heroine, and villain in modern re-tellings of fairy tales. Outside of the academic sphere, she is known for the power of her puns and has told dad jokes that have made her own father groan.*

## **Taking Comfort in Virtual Humor: The Rise of Tolkien Memes in 2020**

### **Nick Polk**

This presentation aims to take a look at the trends of the creation and circulation of Tolkien related memes in 2020. The trends of Tolkien memes will lead into an exploration into the identity, method, and function of memes.

**Bio:** *Nick received his B.A. in Religion at Trevecca Nazarene University. He is currently serving as Circulation Supervisor at Waggoner Library at Trevecca Nazarene University. His primary research interests include the Intersection of Pop Culture and Theology, Tolkien Studies, Punk as a Subculture, and Issues in Process Theology. He and his beautiful wife Kelly live in Nashville, TN.*

# Sunday Presentations

## **The Council of Elrond: An Immersive Audio Experience**

***Jordan Rannells and Chad Bornholdt***

Sound and music are a powerful means of bringing us back to the present moment. To experience things here and now as they are happening. The digital world creates so much potential for experiencing Tolkien's writing in its fullest sensory beauty. Jordan Rannells and Chad Bornholdt invite you to a fully immersive, 3D audio experience of The Council of Elrond. With 25 actors and actresses contributing to this wonderful chapter, you'll hear sound FX, original music, and go behind the scenes to see what it took to bring this project to life.

# Sponsors

## ***The Tolkien Bookshelf***

The Tolkien Bookshelf specializes in hard to find, out of print, used, and rare books by, or relating to, J.R.R. Tolkien. They carry 1st Editions and Custom Fine Bindings of single books and sets, including *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*. They also have Signed copies, Limited/Numbered Editions, and many scarce or unusual items.

You can check out the full range of The Tolkien Bookshelf's stock at their website [tolkienbookshelf.com](http://tolkienbookshelf.com)

## ***Mythologie Candles***

Mythologie Candles began with a spontaneous spark. A little inkling, a vision, and a sudden compulsion to make candles for the fantasy-loving community. We are brand NEW!

The vision began when founder & creator Leah McHenry (aka. LEAH) was preparing to release her fifth studio album, 'Ancient Winter' in the Fall of 2019. What began as an exclusive candle collection to accompany her album for a more immersive listening experience, turned into an obsession with candle making and crafting scents to match fantasy themes and home decor!

Visit Leah's website **[mythologiccandles.com](http://mythologiccandles.com)** today, or check out the social media channels: **Facebook**, **Youtube**, **Instagram**.