

BURNING THACO

1st Edition



**COMPILED INFORMATION FOR PLAYERS AND
GAMEMASTERS FOR RUNNING CLASSIC
DUNGEON CRAWLS IN BURNING WHEEL**

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From the discussion at:

www.burningwheel.org/forum/

There has been little editing of original posts which can be found here:

<http://burningwheel.org/forum/showthread.php?t=2642>

<http://burningwheel.org/forum/showthread.php?t=3505>

<http://burningwheel.org/forum/showthread.php?t=2959>

<http://burningwheel.org/forum/showthread.php?t=2663>

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INTRODUCTION

by Ara Kooser

My fascination with Burning Wheel started when I was looking for a different system to run my fantasy games under. I stumbled across BW on the Forge (<http://www.indie-rpgs.com/forum/>). Ever since I read my first article and received the books in the mail I've been chained to the Wheel in a very good way.

I wondered how to introduce my players to the system. We ran the Sword (available at the BW website) and another short adventure. My players and I were excited but still didn't quite have the feel for the system. I pondered "Can you run an old school dungeon crawl using BW." I hit up the BW forums at (<http://burningwheel.org/forum/index.php>) and found many discussion on how to do this very thing.

You hold before you (or are reading on the screen) a book done with kind permission from many people who are very passionate about BW. What follows is a compilation of discussion from the BW forums about running old school dungeon crawls in the BW system. I hope this is useful to others and it brings back that old school feeling but with a very new vision about how things should be.

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Burning THACO

Special Reference Work
PLAYERS HANDBOOK

**A COMPILED VOULME OF INFORMATION FOR
PLAYERS OF BURNING THAC0, INCLUDING:
CHRACTER CLASSES, BELIEFS, ARTHA, AND
ADVANCEMENTS. YOU WILL NEED A COPY OF
BURNING WHEEL AND THE MONSTER BURNER.**

LIFEPATH LIMITATIONS

Thor Olavsrud

Ok, let's talk lifepath limitations.

To really capture the feel of starting a D&D game, I highly suggest limiting the group to three lifepath characters.

Three lifepath characters tend to be fairly competent at one thing, and not so good at a few other things. And they lack in a lot of other areas. That means every player really needs a strong, direct concept for his character. It also means that such characters will generally have pretty decent niche protection (a staple of D&D).

Such characters will tend to have low Resources and limited gear -- a perfect reason to adventure!

They'll also grow very quickly, which is quite exciting to see! It's amazing how quickly they'll go from n00bs to competent.

In my experience, such characters are perfect for this style of game. You can go for higher numbers of lifepaths, of course, but I think that will subtly change the nature of play. Higher lifepath characters tend to have higher resources, affiliations, reputations, and access to better gear. Their reasons for adventuring are fewer. In some cases, especially with nobility, they'll come with retinues and warbands and so forth that make dungeon delving a stretch.

Anyway, here are a few ideas for human characters. I'm sure there are many other combinations, but these leapt out at me!

Fighter:

Born Noble, Page, Squire
Born Peasant, Hunter, Foot Soldier
Born City, Groom, City Guard
Village Born, Kid, Village Guard
Born Peasant, Runner (Soldier), Freebooter

Paladin:

Born Noble, Page, Religious Acolyte
Village Born, Temple Acolyte, Bannerman

Ranger:

Born Noble, Strider, Archer/Scout
Born Noble, Strider, Hunter
Born Peasant, Hunter, Scout
Born Peasant, Hunter, Strider

Cleric:

Born Peasant, Temple Acolyte, Itinerant Monk
Born Noble, Religious Acolyte, Foot Soldier
Village Born, Acolyte, Village Priest

Wizard:

Born Noble, Arcane Devotee, Sorcerer
Born City, Neophyte Sorcerer, Sorcerer

Thief:

Born Village, Kid, Pickpocket
Born City, Pickpocket, Criminal
Born City, Apprentice, Locksmith

Druid: (Deliverator)

Born Noble, Neophyte, Augur
Born Noble, Neophyte, Speaker of Names
Village Born, Attendant, Speaker of Names

ON PLAYERS BELIEFS

Thor Olavsrud

True to the Burning Wheel philosophy, players have important responsibilities too. The GM will share some information about the module. It's the players' responsibility to look for an angle in the module that they find interesting and want to pursue. Then discuss it with the group and write it into your beliefs!

Mix it up. You can use both generic beliefs that give you a reason for dungeoneering and adventuring, and personalized beliefs that give you a reason for going on this particular adventure.

Generic Beliefs

- Fame is the first step to my fortune, so I will teach the people my name with my deeds.
- With their steel and my sorcery, my comrades and I could achieve great things. I will convince them to join forces as a unit.

Personalized Beliefs

- A dark secret lurks at the heart of the Castle Moravian. I will uncover the secrets of this castle.
- I will gain the favor of St. Cuthbert by recovering his holy relic from the depths of Castle Moravian.
- I will be a great wizard, and the Lost City of Panax holds the key to ancient power! The lore of Panax will be mine.

Use a mix of generic and personal beliefs to drive your characters and give them reason to work together and adventure!

Keep track of your fellow players beliefs too, and use that knowledge to help them out! If a fellow player has a belief

about converting his companions to the worship of St. Cuthbert, play into it! Make it difficult for him. Make him really push it. Don't make it too easy. But also, unless you really don't want to go in that direction, don't make it too hard either.

Maximizing Artha

This subject is equally important in any type of Burning Wheel play, but the very specific goals and quests engendered by Burning Dungeons-type play makes it very easy to write beliefs that you gun toward and resolve in the course of a couple sessions. If you've written your beliefs according to the recommendations above, you shouldn't have any trouble pushing all three of them in meaningful ways each and every session. Your goal should be to use them to push the game every session, and to resolve one of them (i.e., succeeding in convincing the group to join forces, recovering the holy relic, learning the secret of the castle) every one to three sessions. In addition, you should be playing your Character Traits hard, making them an element of play and earning Fate from them. In this way, you should be earning somewhere between 3 and 6 Fate points and 1 to 3 Persona points every session.

And don't be afraid to choose the heroic path in the face of tough opposition! That's the way to earn Deeds points!

Use Advancement to Your Advantage

Part of the fun and addictiveness of D&D is leveling up and gaining new abilities. In the Burning Wheel version, we replace experience points with advancement through tests. To maximize the experience, you've really got to learn how Burning Wheel advancement works inside and out and use it! Game the system. Use events in play as a springboard to push to test your skills. Look at the obstacles listed with skills in the Character Burner (if they're available) and try to maneuver the events in play to allow you to make tests of the level you need. Make sure to

understand thoroughly how to use Helping and FoRKing to adjust the obstacle to get the level of test you need.

Learn the Practice and Instruction rules and keep track of the practice you do! Both systems will help you shape your character in the direction you want.

Engage in Table Chatter

Look, when you're playing Burning Wheel in this style, it's not really about deep character drama and themes. This is more of a beer und pretzels, laugh til your sides split, make obscure movie references in silly accents way to play. Keep it loose and fun. And talk about what's happening in the game and what would be cool or what it means. All good Burning Wheel games should have that sort of table chatter, but you have additional ammunition in this type of game! Namely, if you're playing this way I'm guessing that more than one of you has experience with old school D&D. Draw from your wealth of knowledge about how old modules and D&D sessions in general worked. Throw out favorite tropes (We've got to all meet at an inn!), favorite monsters (oh man, we're in the oubliette? I hope there isn't an otyugh down here!), favorite locations (he's totally talking about the Isle of Dread!), and so forth. Your fellow players and the GM will be able to pick up the ball and run with it.

HEALING

Luke

Ah, but the healing/downtime cycle is part of the fun of Burning Wheel. While the injured are resting up, the remainder of the group can practice their skills and earn tests for advancement. But barring that, there's no reason you can't have a good fight each and every game session. We try to have one in our Burning THAC0 game. Sometimes more than one! Fights in

BW aren't that deadly until you hit the really high powered stuff -- creatures with a Power 8 and a skill of 5, for example. If you limit your opposition to knives, spears and swords and keep their Power at 4 and skill at 4, you can generally lay into your PCs with abandon. Sure, there's a chance that someone's going to get very hurt, but it's unlikely. Most folks will come out with some Light and Midi badges. Those are easily tended to and taken care of.

Healing Continued **Kublai**

Nog, Mirrorwine, and Blood Blossoms all add dice to the Recovery test. So can Prayers and spells. Nothing reduces pips. Nothing makes wounds go away without a test (barring major miracles of course!). I've seen Midi wounds healed in a week because of great treatment tests and lots of advantage dice. It shouldn't get better than that. Magic healing potions should add to the recovery dice. I think Greedy's numbers are dead on. To be boring about it, lesser healing potions add 1D, healing potions add 2D, greater healing potions add 3D, and the ultra-rare, super-powerful Potion of Recovery adds 6D. The obstacle to brew these should be double the amount of dice the potion would grant. So a healing potion would be Ob4. You would test the Alchemy or Herbalism skill. FoRKs include herbalism and alchemy.

CHARACTERSPELLS

Mire

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

Ob 3[^] Actions 2

The stone becomes sludge, the earth becomes mud. The ground affected area turns to muck, slowing down passage. Successes over the obstacle create an obstacle penalty to all movement and positioning tests in the area.

Ley Rift

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

Ob 3[^] 3 Actions

His hand waved through the air, tearing apart the etherial veil. The caster has ripped open a rift of magical energies, flooding the area affected. Extra successes create an obstacle penalty for any Sorcery tests in the affected area. This penalty fades at one point per volley as the rift slowly seals again.

Wizard's Door

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

Ob 3 Actions 4

With one touch, the bricks leapt aside and allowed him to pass. The sorcerer's touch will create a portal in any wall of stone or wood up to a pace thick. The obstacle may be increased by one for each additional pace of thickness.

Coil and Knot

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

Ob 2[^] Actions: 8

With a few deft gestures, the wizard knots the ends together, as well as any sailor at sea. This spell allows the caster to tie or untie any ropes or cords in his presence. Meeting the obstacle will effect a simple overhand knot, and successes over will improve the knot as per the obstacle list for the Knots skill. The obstacles are the same for untying the knot. Multiple knots may be created in the same casting, as long as all the ropes to be tied are in the area of effect.

Alternative Spell Systems

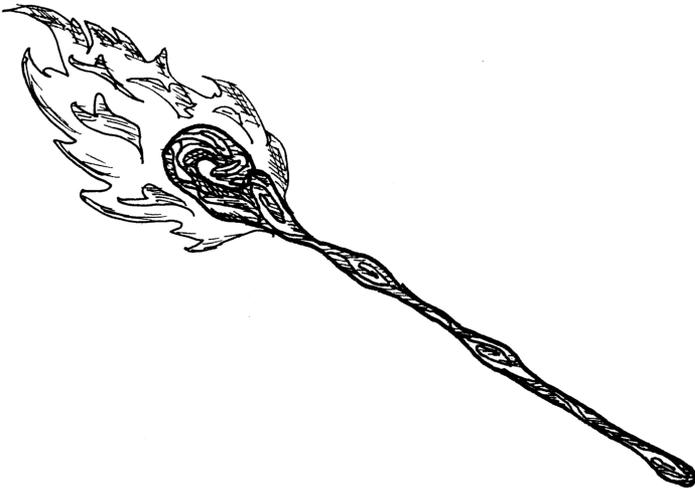
Please see the threads at www.burningwheel.org:

Sorcery – Simple Magic

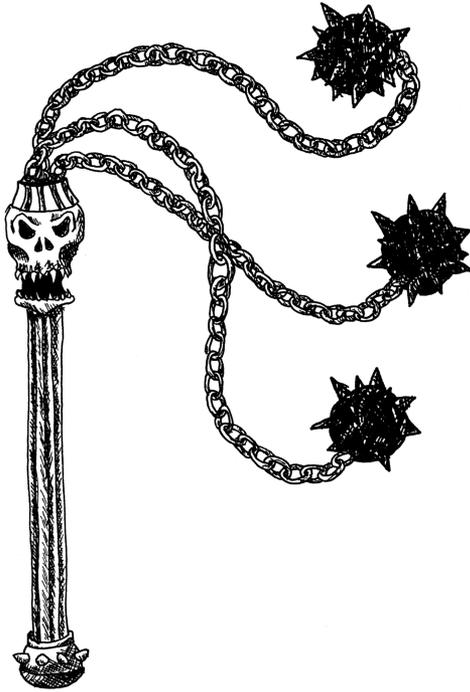
<http://burningwheel.org/forum/showthread.php?t=3674>

Art of Socery

<http://burningwheel.org/forum/showthread.php?t=3718>



Burning THACO



SPECIAL REFERENCE WORK GAME MASTERS GUIDE

**A COMPILED VOLUME OF INFORMATION
PRIMARYLY USED BY BURNING THACO GAME
MASTERS, INCLUDING: USE OF MODULES,
TREASURE AND LOOT, MAXIMIZING ARTHA,
RANDOM ENCOUNTERS, AND OTHER SAGELY
ADVICE.**

DEALING WITH MODULES

Thor Olavsrud

The Use of Modules

Modules are a great way to kick off a Burning Dungeons game, but some are better than others (of course) and even the better ones require a little bit of massaging.

Briefings and Beliefs

First things first: I recommend discarding any of the old notions that the players should be completely surprised by what's coming. Show the players the cover of the module you're running. Read them the back cover blurb. If it has an intro section, consider reading that to them.

You don't have to reveal every twist and secret; just give them a broad overview. In other words, if the module is about delving into the Lost Temple of Whatsit to recover the Orb of Destiny that was stolen by Whosit during the reign of Thatguy, etc., tell the players! Then all of them should write at least one belief that takes them on the quest.

Pushing Conflict Early

Also, it seems that every module I pick up has the structural integrity of mushy peas. You'll have to take it into your own hands. Front load conflict. The first module I ran for this group (The Vakhund), had the players join up with a caravan in a town and described days of journey before it got to the point that something happened (other than random encounters, natch). We're talking potentially hours of play before something significant happens.

Don't let that happen. As a Burning Wheel GM, you have a ton of information at your disposal that D&D DMs don't. You have your players' characters' Beliefs, Instincts and Traits. You know

what they got excited about when you gave them the briefing on the module. And in addition, like a DM, you have the module itself. Use those tools to create conflicts and issues the players will have to address. If your module starts with pages of journey and exposition before anything happens, give the players a few sentences of synopsis and fast forward to the good stuff.

At the same time, use this opportunity to foreshadow the big stuff that will be coming down the road at them later.

Ignore Filler

A lot of obstacles and opposition in modules is filler. It's there to take up time, to provide a reason for the niche skills of one type of character, or to make the experience seem "real." It's ok to leave a few of these in for old time's sake, but mostly, unless it's something your players will really get a kick out of, just go ahead and invoke the Say Yes or Roll Dice rule. Give maybe a sentence describing how the characters overcame the obstacle and move on.

Consider the Opposition

D&D expects characters to be able to take on numbers that are murderous in *Burning Wheel*. Orcs are scary in *Burning Wheel*! Especially once they've got five lifepaths. In general, if you want opposition to be weaker than the characters, provide one or two less than the number of characters. Even odds make for an even challenge. Giving the opponents the advantage in numbers makes for a challenging encounter indeed. Of course, some monsters are more difficult than others!

That said, don't be afraid to challenge the players. Make them work for it! If they sweat a little bit, victory will be all the sweeter. In any case, instead of throwing 20 orcs at the characters, consider 7 or 8.

ADDITIONAL ADVICE

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

In D&D, a lot of encounter filler also serves needs not found in Burning Wheel.

One need is the incremental experience and loot gain for advancement. This is fairly critical in D&D, where a significant part of the game is leveling or acquiring wealth, as otherwise your character's abilities are static. In Burning Wheel, of course, the characters will earn tests from any encounter, and advance that way. Loot should also be deemphasized, I think, as not to outshine the characters' own abilities. More on that later.

Filler

Another need for these filler encounters is to deplete the characters to make the big encounters tougher (Third Edition even posits that encounters should deplete about 20% of the party's resources!). Fights are tough enough in Burning Wheel, without chipping away at the characters for no real reason. Not to say you don't need lesser encounters, just that they should have some relevance. And without massive loot from the prior need, you won't have a need to take that away, either.

Treasure and Loot

Less is more. In many other games, loot is a form of advancement for characters, and it's not really needed for Burning Wheel. Finding that +1D sword should seem like a special event, not routine. As to treasure, describe it all in color, and then give a small amount of "cash on hand" dice at the end.

COMMENTS FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Luke

I'd like to add some commentary from the other side of the screen.

Originally Posted by Thor Olavsrud

"Make it difficult for him. Make him really push it. Don't make it too easy. But also, unless you really don't want to go in that direction, don't make it too hard either.

Why do this? Artha, that's why. By making your Beliefs about your fellow players and then playing into those Beliefs, you're setting up a huge reward cushion. GM being stingy or not hitting your shit? Then start fucking with the Paladin! You'll get rewarded and it'll be a hoot. You can't lose."

Maximizing Artha

This subject is equally important in any type of Burning Wheel play, but the very specific goals and quests... snip

So, as the GM, what do you do when your players have "got it" and are sitting on piles of artha? You hit them hard, that's what. Once the players have got a handle on the system and have a half dozen fate points and 3 or 4 persona points, suddenly, you can creep up those obstacles. That first chasm was a cinch for Speed test Ob 2, but what about this one at Ob 3, or that sheer wall that's going to require an Ob 4 Climbing test.

Give your critters better gear specifically designed to punish your players. You've got dudes in heavy armor? Fine. First few encounters hit them with clubs and swords. But at the end, those well-equipped goons trot out maces, axes and spears.

When your players start to sweat, remind them to spend their artha. Tell that knight player, "You better drop a few persona on this one. You don't want to get injured." Sure, they'll glare at

you for your dirty GM tricks -- How dare you make them spend their precious rewards! -- but it'll up the tension and make the rewards meaningful.

Obstacles and Baddies

For adventures like Burning Dungeons, start the individual obstacles at 2. Mid way through the adventure, kick the Obs up to 3. Toward the end, bump them up to 4 and 5. Terrain gets rougher, weapons get better, opponent's get smarter.

(For group obstacles -- tests for which all the players will help one another -- bump those obstacles up by one.)

For numbers of baddies, start the party outnumbering the baddies (Orcs, Goblins, Satyr, etc). Then midway through, match them up one on one. For the desperate super awesome fight in the climax, make sure the baddies outnumber the good guys.

Use these simple techniques and the character sheets will literally be scorched from the players changing Beliefs and Instincts, spending artha and making advancements.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS AND FAILED TESTS

Thor Olvasrud

Random Encounters

Random encounters. They're a big thing in D&D. Or at least they used to be when I played. But they don't really fit Burning Wheel that well. Ignore filler, remember?

At the same time, they really contribute to the D&D feel. So here's my suggestion: Use encounters as the consequences of failed tests. Remember that failed tests in Burning Wheel are an opportunity for the GM to add complications.

For instance, let's say the characters are journeying from the city of Threshold to the Lost Valley of Hutaaka. That's an Orienteering roll. The obstacle for Orienteering in an unfamiliar land is 3, and the characters are unskilled! Even with a map, they fail the test.

Now you have a choice. One, the failed test could mean they get lost and now they'll have to find a way to change their circumstances in order to get a new test. Maybe it's time to use Circles to find a guide. Hope you don't fail, otherwise he might lead you into a trap for some bandits! But you have another interesting choice as well. They failed the Orienteering test, but maybe that means they run right into an unexpected encounter! If so, they're still reasonably on track to get where they need to go, but they'll need to deal with this new threat first.

Failed tests

Here are some examples from my games:

- A failed Orienteering test led the characters into an encounter with an extortionist troll as they were climbing a narrow stair carved into a cliff.
- A failed Hunting test acquire some food led to an encounter with some Great Wolves who had just killed a buck.
- A failed Navigation test led to a battle with pirates on the high seas.
- A failed Tracking test led to an encounter with an enraged boar.

You can use this technique when running from a module with a pre-written random encounter table. I suggest you discard any of the encounters that don't interest you or you suspect won't interest the players. I also suggest choosing an encounter from

the table based on what you feel is appropriate, rather than rolling at random. Generally, encounters with intelligent creatures that you can find a strong motivation for work the best. That allows the players the opportunity to approach the encounter from different angles.

For instance, my players decided to haggle with the troll over his toll, and wound up losing their shirts as they paid him off (we colored it in terms of giving him their provisions, which ultimately led to the failed Hunting test!). In the process though, they also learned some things from the troll about the situation on the plateau to which they were traveling.

ON CARVING UP MODULES

Thor Olvasrud

I'm going to answer here for now because I think it could be useful for the thread to have another actual example. If you want to dig deeper into your game though, we should start another Fevered Circle thread. Cool?

Originally Posted by TimP

"I thought I was doing this already, but maybe I need a sharper carving knife. One problem I've ran into with the particular module is that there's all this really cool stuff going on back in town between various NPCs that I'm dying to get the players involved in, but the dungeon part of the module is only tenuously connected to that cool stuff. For example, you have to fight your way through this goblin tribe to get the lynchpin clue that sets everything into motion. It's a lot of work before you get any story reward! At the same time I feel like that work is fairly necessary for Old Skool feel...it gives the adventure some gravity and the players a sense of real accomplishment."

Ok, here's a perfect example for the knife. I think you've got two choices in a situation like this. Either you need to tie the

dungeon more firmly into the situation or you should ruthlessly jettison it. Find another way to give the characters the clue if necessary.

My personal experiences have been that it simply doesn't work to go through a dungeon with exaggerated attention given to every room, door and area the way it works in D&D. I think I went into that a little bit in one of the previous posts.

In D&D, especially old-school D&D the way it was 16+ years ago when I was playing it, the dungeons were the focus of play. Each was designed with a large amount of detail -- every room carefully described. You went room to room, mapping it out and clearing it of monsters and treasure.

But no matter how cool your descriptions are, that stuff can get old in a hurry, especially when you don't have individual gold pieces to count, you aren't amassing voluminous lists of potions and magic gear, and each fight and trap is potentially deadly and not just there to soak up excess resources.

So, instead, take your inspiration from the same place that the writers of the old D&D modules took their inspiration. The Fellowship's struggle through the Mines of Moria, Conan and Valeria's crazy trip through the underground city of Xuchotl in Red Nails, etc.

Breakdown of a Scene

Let's look at Moria. What does it consist of?

- 1. You've got the business at the gate with the tentacled monstrosity*
- 2. You've got a long journey into darkness where nothing much happens but the atmosphere is conveyed.*
- 3. You have the discovery of Balin's tomb with some time for*

dialogue

4. You have the fight at the tomb with a cave troll!

5. There's the flight into darkness.

6. Crossing the bridge.

Let's break it down into rolls.

1. Some versus Speed and Power tests while Gandalf is testing his Elven Doors-wise.

2. A bit of description and an Orienteering test by Gandalf with Aragorn helping.

3. No real test here. MAYBE a reading test to make out the Chronicle.

4. Fight!

5. Versus Speed test.

6. Range & Cover followed by Fight! for Gandalf and the Balrog.

That's about it! You don't need much more than this to make a good dungeon scene!

Some Tips

- 1. Keep it tight! You don't need to delve into every room. Give just enough to convey the feel and atmosphere.
- 2. Bring in the traps and unessential encounters and junk as the consequences of failed rolls. Otherwise, stick to the one or two really important encounters and leave be.
- 3. Don't worry about lots of inventive traps and stuff like that. One cool or interesting trap is better than half a dozen half-hearted ones.
- 4. Use your atmosphere mechanically. Are they using torchlight? Then apply a dim light Obstacle penalty for Perception-related stuff. Are they in wet, limestone caves? The slick floor ought to provide a Speed penalty. Cramped conditions can give Positioning Advantage or

Disadvantage, depending on the circumstances. Fighting from ladders or ropes? Ouch!

“I'm thinking we need to use more Bloody Vs. tests to streamline things, but then one runs into the quandry of cutting into the three lifepath characters earning the tests they need for advancement.”

Use Bloody Versus tests as the situation demands. Don't worry about short changing the players on tests. They're going to get plenty of tests.

“The lack of Relationships is a bitch. Every other BW game I've GMed I am able to rely on them heavily. Relationships are a great tool for pushing against Beliefs and getting the players invested in the game. The Relationships we DO have (there are three amongst two characters) aren't tied into the module. At all. I've taken steps to work one of the Relationships in, but I should have advised those players to take Relationships pertinent to the module.”

Remember that as the GM, you have the ability to give relationships as you see fit. We not infrequently grant relationships as the reward for accomplishing something in play, as a consequence or even compromise from a Duel of Wits, etc. That's your call.

Also, don't forget to encourage them to use their Circles to bring in NPCs. Make the players give a detail or two about their history with the character if they get enough successes to Name the character (you technically get to give the detail if they fail). Such Circled characters should have the same effect as relationships.

ADVENTURE EXAMPLE

Start of an Adventure with Characters

Thor Olavsrud

Our Burning Iberia game had gotten a bit heavy, and many of us agreed that we wanted to take a break from those characters for a little while. That was also right around the time when we'd been discussing Burning THAC0 on the boards, and everybody was into the idea of trying some old-school modules to see how they translated into Burning Wheel play. I happened to have a trilogy of modules lying around that I'd purchased from Troll Lord Games back around 2000 or 2001, when D&D 3.0 was released.

The modules themselves are somewhat mediocre, but the setting is pretty cool, with a vaguely Germanic feel reminiscent of the Hanseatic League period -- but with goblins! One of the things I really dug about this setting was that the humans and goblins having trading relationships. That simple fact turns a lot of the trad-fantasy assumptions on its ear, so it was fresh enough to get me excited to play with it.

Since everyone was on board, we got together for a character burning session. Our character burning sessions have always started with world burning, but we had to handle things a bit differently since we were jumping off with modules. Instead, I gave them this synopsis of the first module:

Vakhund: Into the Unknown

Synopsis

The Meister Herbert Rotenheimer is a powerful merchant of Bergholt. Bergholt is a large city (pop. ~13,000) located on the Interzæ sea. Its commercial ties have made it prosperous. Many outlying towns and thorps have strong economic, though not

military or political, ties to the city. Meister Rotenheimer recently fled his home with his daughter, Evanna, fearing for his life. The adventure begins with Rotenheimer and Evanna in the Halptier, a region ruled by the powerful Baron Premiger. They are joining a caravan accompanied by the PCs. The caravan's first destination is Mejketek, a goblin trading outpost deep in the wilderlands beyond the Treklant Creek. It is the furthest outpost of the Zjerd, goblins of the kingdoms in the sothren volds. Merchants from the far ends of the Interzae gather here and trade all manner of goods, the most prized being the small mechanical contraptions used for keeping time, for which the goblins are famed throughout the known world. En route, the caravan stops at a watch tower and tax collection point called The Vakhund.

When the Meister's enemies catch up with him, the PCs will have to prove their heroism and mettle by venturing into the goblin kingdoms.

Sample suggestions for involvement

1. Members of a local militia assigned to accompany the caravan as far as The Vakhund
2. A character delivering a message to Kaptane Stiegler at The Vakhund.
3. Hired to work for the lead driver of the caravan.
4. Traveling with the caravan for safety until it reaches its final destination at Jugensborg.

The beginning

The chilly mists of the early morning rise off the fair surrounding Frisia. A wooden palisade and earthen embankment wrap tightly about this cluster of small houses, rambling barns, and squat buildings. Warm wisps of smoke rise lazily from several chimneys and linger, only for moments,

around the town's roofs before disappearing above the massive green firs that dominate the horizon. The only sound heard in the crisp fall air is the dull stamp of oxen yoked to a cart in the early morning.

Frisia is a small farming and timber community of no more than 500 inhabitants. It lies in the northern periphery of the Graffenvold, sixty leagues north of The Vakhund. Surrounding the town is an earthen embankment topped with a wooden palisade. It overlooks a dry moat, which is under construction. Frisia's buildings and houses are one and two story wood or wattle and daub constructions, either shingled with wood or thatched with straw. Most buildings have simple wood cat chimenys, while the homes of the wealthier inhabitants have stone chimenys. Frisia is the last human settlement on the road south into the goblin kingdoms.

Ronart Tonnahor owns Frisia's only tavern, the Bierkeller. It is a rambling two story structure. Having grown wealthy as a result of the trade passing through Frisia, Ronart adorned the Bierkeller with two stone chimneys, plastered its sides, and added a stone floor and wooden shingles. Within is a large series of small halls and rooms for rent.

I also read them the back cover matter:

“Travel south into the goblin kingdoms is always fraught with danger. Many will go only as far as the Baron's outpost, The Vakhund, the Watchdog Tower, and reside there in safety while merchants and others fare their way further down the road. But what happens when The Vakhund is attacked by goblins and bandits, a princess is kidnapped, and only a dangerous trip into the dark, infested goblin kingdoms will reveal the answer?”

With all that in mind, we started discussing character concepts. This group usually makes characters that are between 4 and 6 lifepaths. But to really give it a feel like low-level D&D, we agreed that everyone would make 3 lifepath characters. Whereas higher lifepath characters often have the wherewithal to purchase reputations, affiliations, and even warbands, 3 lifepath characters have to be lean and focused. They're enough to get across one concept/idea, but not much more than that. But it's among my favorite lifepath limitations in Burning Wheel. You can get a nice, tight selection of skills, but you really have to make hard choices about how to distribute your Stats, your skill points, and how to allocate your Resource points. Even better, characters will grow and change very rapidly as they are played. Once you get into the fourth and fifth sessions, characters start learning new things like mad!

Anyway, the only other limitations placed upon the players: They had to have a reason to be with the caravan, they had to have beliefs that would propel them into danger to protect the girl from the setup, and they had to make characters that were capable of fighting (physically, magically or otherwise) and delving into dark dungeons and crumbling towers.

We wound up with a really nice selection of characters that are almost a picture-perfect D&D adventuring party. We've got the elven ranger (Born Etharch, Forester, Ranger) with all sorts of crazy powers, a mercenary fighter (Born City, City Guard, Freebooter), a half-orc rogue (Village Born, Village Peddler, Hunter -- with the Fey Blood trait), a paladin (Born Noble, Page, Religious Acolyte), a dwarf fighter (Born Clansman, Miller, Foot Soldier), and a druidess (Village Born, Attendant, Speaker of Names).

The astute among you have already noticed that Attendant and Speaker of Names are lifepaths that aren't found in the

Character Burner! Well, Anthony really wanted to play a D&D-type druid, with Summoning, but that's really hard to do with the existing lifepaths in 3 lifepaths. And the setting we established had these types of folks as reasonably common. So I had Anthony burn up some lifepaths with his trusty Monster Burner, while I provided the peer review. Karina turned out quite well, I think. Anthony keeps the Attendant LP here for now. As for Speaker of Names, well, you'll just have to wait until we're ready to release the PDF of the revised Summoning Chapter to get a look at it.

Everyone started with mostly proto-beliefs, i.e., broad statements that will evolve into something specific as play gets under way. I told everyone that they should have beliefs that they should have a good shot at resolving within 3 to 5 sessions.

Here are a few examples:

1. I will win Indri's hand, amassing a large fortune is the first step toward gaining it.
2. The secondborn are the kith and kin of the Eldar, I will protect the lives of my fellow man.
3. The yrch [goblins and ocs] are perversions of the Eldar, I will destroy them wherever I find them.
1. I am a conduit to the land, I will guide the caravan safely through it.
2. The spirits of the Dampfrat are unknown to me, I shall gain their favor.
3. We are all children of the earth, I shall offer aid to all who need it .

1. I will journey into the Goblin Kingdoms to discover the true nature of my heritage at any cost or risk.
2. My knowledge of Men & Goblins' hatred and fear of one-another will allow me to unite or at least profit from both of them.
3. I will prove my merit/mettle with my friends with deeds of glory!

The next post will deal with the beginning of the journey and a confrontation with an assassin!

Finnick the half-goblin started with: a poor quality axe and knife, traveling gear, clothes, and boots. He also purchased two 1D reputations. He's managed to scavenge poor quality plated leather and a run of the mill crossbow from battlefields.

Carfindel the elven ranger started with: Plated Leather Armor, Run of the Mill Bow, Run of the Mill Spear w/Beak, Elven Clothes, Elven Shoes, Travel Gear, and Elven Mirrorwine (since healing potions are always useful).

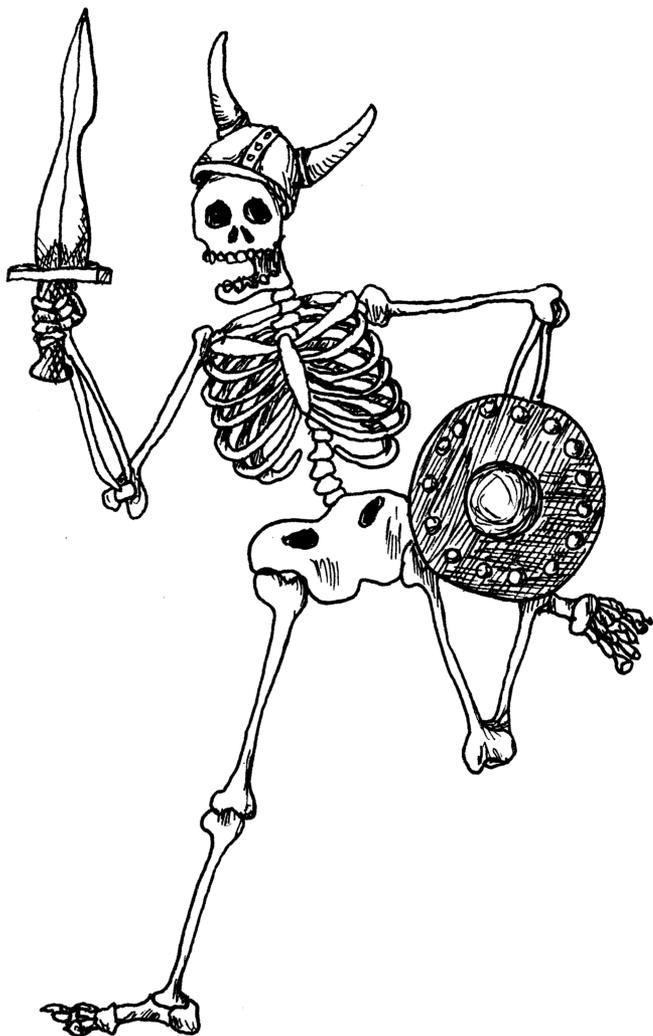
Kirk the mercenary fighter started with: Clothes, Shoes, Traveling Gear, Poor-Quality Polearm, Poor-Quality Sword, Plated Leather Armor, and a Shield. He's managed to scavenge a run of the mill polearm and crossbow from the battlefield.

Karina the druidess started with: PQ arms (staff and dagger), clothes, shoes, and travelling gear.

Julius the Paladin started with: run of the mill arms (mace and sword), run of the mill chain mail, clothes, shoes, a riding horse (and possibly some other stuff. I don't have his sheet handy).

Krank the dwarf started with: dwarven arms (hammer), dwarven-made chainmail, clothes, shoes (and possibly some other stuff. I don't have his sheet handy).

MONSTERS



Harpy/Siren

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

Concept: The creature from Greek myth, often tasked with carrying men off to their doom.

Traits: Cruel, Winged, Feathered, Slashing Claws, Heartless, Siren Song

Stats: Will B5, Perception B4, Agility B6, Speed B6, Power B5, Forte B5

Attributes: Steel B8, Hesitation 5 (2), Health B5, Mortal Wound B11

PTGS: Su: B3 Li: B6 Mi: B8 Se: B9 Tr: B10 MW: B11

Skills: Savage Attack B5, Hunting B4, Tracking B5, Stealthy B5, Scavenging B4

Beliefs: My master may want these men, but I need meat;

Instincts: Always sing to my prey

New trait: Siren Song (Dt, 5pts) The call of the siren has lured many a man to his death. Forces a Steel test with the obstacle increased by the singer's Will. The Hesitation action is a special one - Follow the Song. The hesitating character will follow the song until his hesitation runs out, or something breaks the spell, namely being injured or shaken out of it. Any remaining hesitation is changed to Stand and Drool.

Bugbear

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

Concept: An amalgam of the D&D creature and the old English "bogeyman" myths.

Traits: Bear-headed, Coarse Fur, Fangs, Piercing Fangs, Rending Claws, Tearing Claws, Fearsome Beast, Heartless, Night Eyed, Soft Step, Smells Blood*, Hoarding

Stats: Will B4, Perception B4, Agility B4, Speed B4, Power B7, Forte B7

Attributes: Steel B7, Hesitation 6 (3), Health B4, Mortal Wound B12, Resources B0

PTGS: Su: B4 Li: B8 Mi: B10 Se: B11 Tr: B12 MW: B13

Skills: Brawling B4, Mace B5, Intimidation B5, Stealthy B4, Tracking B4, Forest-wise B3, Stray child-wise B3, Scavenging B3, Hunting B3

Resources: Goes bump in the night (1D infamous rep), poor quality plated leather armor, poor quality morning star, scavenged bits and bobs, nest full of bones

Beliefs: The young ones taste the best, so I'll take them first.

Instincts: Never leave the woods. Always take my prey to my lair.

* Smells Blood is mechanically identical to the "Eye of the Hunter" trait

Owlbear

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

Concept: Magical hybrid of a bear and owl

Stats: Wil B3, Per B3, Agl B4, Spd B5, Pow B8, For B8

Attributes: Ste B7, Hea B6, Hes 3, MW B14, Ref B4

PTGS: Su: B5 Li: B9 Mi: B11 Se: B12 Tr: B13 MW: B14

Skills: Savage Attack B7, Intimidation B6 Traits: Ursine body, Avian head, Massive Stature, Terrible Beak, Berzerker, Unfeeling, Unflinching, Untamable, Sight of the Owl, Cruel Strength, Rending Claws, Tearing Claws, Fearsome Beast, Feathered, Coat of fur, Hideous!, Leathery skin, Abomination, Red-Rimmed Eyes

Weapons:

Beak: I:B5 M:B10 S:B15 VA1 Slow Short

Claws: I:B5 M:B10 S:B15 VA1 Fast Short

Beliefs: Must protect the young. Everything is my prey. I will not be tamed.

Instincts: Attack on sight; Kill all prey; Defend the nest.

Otyugh

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

Concept: Tentacled subterranean monster that devours anything.

Traits: Otyugh form, Resistant to Fire, Encrusted Hide, Covered in Filth, Rife with Disease, Thorn-tipped tentacles, Long grasp, Crushing Jaws, Unfeeling, Night Eyed, Massive Stature

Stats: Will B3, Perception B3, Agility B3, Speed B4, Power G8, Forte B8

Attributes: Steel B7, Hesitation 7, Health B7, Mortal Wound B15
PTGS: Su: B5 Li: B9 Mi: B12 Se: B13 Tr: B14 MW: B15

PTGS:

Skills: Stealthy B4, Camouflage B4, Brawling B5, Observation B4

Beliefs: They're all food eventually, but the fresh ones are tastier.

Instincts: Always camouflage myself in the muck. Always retreat once I've got my food.

IMS: Thorn-tipped tentacles, I:3 M:6 S:9 Add 2 VA 1 Slow Longer, may lock and strike, +1D to locks
Crushing jaws I:B7 M:B13 S:G3 Add 2 VA 2 Fast Short, may lock and strike

New traits:

Otyugh Form (Cos) The otyugh has a large ovoid body

supported by three stubby legs (3x multiplier). A vicious maw sits on the body, with two thorn-tipped tentacles sprout from the sides, and a smaller tentacle with it's sensory organs sprouts from the top.

Encrusted Hide (Dt) This creatures tough hide is encrusted with dried and decayed matter, giving it the protection of chainmail armor over all of its body.

Covered in Filth (C-O) This is a call-on for Stealthy and Camouflage in sewers and swamps.

Rife with Disease (Dt) This creature is so unsanitary that wounds it causes are infected badly. Adds a +2 Ob penalty to all treatment tests for wounds caused by this creature.

Thorn-tipped Tentacles (Dt) The tentacles grant +1D to Locks when used alone. The ends sport nasty thorns, and it may choose instead to lock and strike with these (without the bonus to lock). The thorns are +1 Power Add 2 VA 1 Slow weapons, but the base Power is halved. The tentacles, whether locking or locking and striking, are Long weapons.

Long Grasp (Dt) This creature is adept at grabbing its prey from a distance. There is no penalty to locks at optimal, and the penalty is halved at lunging

Rust monster

ghashsnaga (Ara Kooser)

Concept: A subterranean ant-eater looking creature with two giant feelers and armor plating. Likes to eat metals.

Traits: Night-Eyed, Metal Lust, Antennae, Rust Aura, treat hide as maille

Stats: Will B3, Perception B3 (B6 when seeking metals), Agility B4, Speed B5, Power B2, Forte B4

Attributes: Steel B4, Hesitation 7 , ReflexesB3, Health B3, Mortal Wound B9

PTGS:

Skills: Metal-wise B4, Scavenging B3, Foraging B3, Stealthy B3, Two-Antennae Fighting Training B4, Antennae strike B4

Beliefs: Underground is better, darkness even better, iron is exalted above all else

Instincts: Always pursue metal and then strike with antennae, Eat ferrous first then all others, If they hurt you eat what you can and then run.

New Traits:

Metal Lust (Dt, 2pts) When presented with a metal object the rust monster must make a Steel check to avoid stopping and eating it. It takes the rust monster 1 action to consume roughly 1 lb of material. All other actions scripted by the rust monster become Eat metal until the object is consumed.

Rusted Aura (Dt, 8pts) Unnatural, Always On, Always Wins, Pain in the Ass . If the rust monster successfully strikes metal armor or is block by a metal shield the armor losses 1D of protection each time. If a metal weapon makes contact with the rust monster on the first strike reduce the weapons VA by 1. Once the VA reaches 0 reduce the quality of the weapon by one step if it is reduce below Poor then the weapon is a pile of rust.

Lich

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

Concept: Classic Lich - a wizard who in pursuit of power has given up his mortal body and become an undead horror.

Traits: Desiccated Body, Second Sight, Shadow and Dust, Amulet Bound, Dead to Pain, Stillness, Night-Eyed, Gifted, Not Alive Yet Not Dead

Stats: Will G8, Perception G8, Agility B4, Speed B6, Power B6, Forte G8

Attributes: Steel G10, Hesitation 0, Health G8, Mortal Wound B14

PTGS: Su:B5 Li:B9 Mi:B11 Se:B12 Tr:B13 MW:B14

Skills: Sorcery G8, Intimidation G6, Persuasion G4, Research G4, Symbology G6, Enchanting G8, Astrology G4, Alchemy G8, Graveyard-wise G4, Philosophy G6, Calligraphy B4, Profane-wise G4, Stealthy B5, Engraving B3, Falsehood G4, Brawling B4, Torture G6, Death-wise G4, Aura Reading G6

Gear: Rags, Iron Crown, Eldritch Staff (Sustainer Matrix)

IMF: Fists, I 3, M 6, S 9, Pow -, Add 2, WS F, VA -, Short

Beliefs: There is no death I can not overcome. Mortal men are there to be preyed upon.

Instincts: Cast Horror at the start of a conflict. Never leave a witness alive.

Minotaur

Thor Olavsrud

Concept: Terrifying, bull-headed man eater.

Traits: Bull Head (cos), Bull Tail (cos), Massive Stature, Horned (Dt), Omnivore, Bull's Snout (as Wolf's Snout), Large Ears (Dt), Berzerker (Dt), Brute (Dt)

Stats: Will B3, Perception B5 (6), Agility B4, Speed B5 , Power B7 , Forte B7



Attributes: Steel B7 , Health B6 , Reflexes B5 , Mortal Wound B13

PTGS: Su:B4 , Li:B8 , Mi:B10 , Se:B11 , Tr: B12 , MW:B13

Skills: Brawling B5, Axe (labrys) B4, Maze-wise B5, Foraging B3, Tracking B4, Intimidation B5, Throwing B4, Sacrifice-wise B3

Equipment: Labrys (as Footman's Axe), leather armor, loin cloth, meat

Beliefs: 1. They must worship me, for I am the son of a god.
2. They are all my meat. 3. I shall escape from this labyrinth and wreak my vengeance!

Instincts: 1. Always Charge when cornered. 2. Always keep a rock for throwing. 3. Always spray new corridors.

Animated Cauldron
Thor Olavsrud

Concept: Animated Cauldron

Description: An iron cauldron five feet across at the mouth that dominates the center of the abandoned hut of the witch Ulizmila. The outside of the cauldron is engraved with cavorting devils.

Stats: Will B1, Perception B3, Agility B3, Speed B4, Power B6, Forte B6

Attributes: Reflexes B3, Mortal Wound B12, Speed Multiplier: x3 (stubby legs from Cauldron Form), Steel N/A, Health N/A, Hesitation N/A

PTGS: Superficial B4, Light B7, Midi B9, Severe B10, Traumatic B11, Mortal B12

Skills: None

Traits: Cauldron Form (x3 Speed Multiplier), Unfeeling (MB p. 340), Tough as Nails (CB p. 289), Iron Hide (4D of armor, armor cannot be damaged), Brass Skin (MB p. 331), Amulet Bound (MB p. 313, Brass Plate engraved with Rune of Movement on Cauldron's pedestal), Unyielding Iron (opponents are +1 Ob to Natural Defenses against Charge and Push), Low Center of Gravity (+1D to Charge and Push actions).

Instincts: 1. If the hut is disturbed, awaken. 2. Charge them! 3. Push them out!

MAGIC ITEMS



Robe of Useful Items

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

This tattered looking robe is covered in numerous small patches, each one bearing an embroidered design of one of numerous handy objects - everything from ladders and rope to small boats! The wearer just needs to tear off the patch he desires and throw it on the ground, and the item will appear. To take an item from the robe, declare what you are looking for, and the GM sets a Resources obstacle. The robe has an effective B3 Resources to roll for the item in question. Players may not help this roll in any way save via artha. Likewise, the robe may not help a player's Resource test, although "loans" may be created without the need to pay them back. The robe's dice are taxed normally, except there is no way to recover temporary tax. On failed tests not resulting in the gift of kindness (or the player chooses to cut his losses), the exact wrong item is created instead of the desired one (or just a humorous one) at the GM's discretion.

Draco's Skiff

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

A palm-sized hematite figurine of a dragon with its wings raised as if taking flight. When placed into water reflecting the light of the moon it grows to the size of a small boat capable of carrying a dozen men. The small craft has no sails or oars, but will travel in the direction it is steered along rivers and coastal areas, granting +1D to any Pilot skill tests

Mantle of the Crocodile

Stormsweeper (Anthony Hersey)

This full cloak, made from the hide of a large crocodile, has been enchanted by an unknown hand. Under the cover of night, the wearer appears to be a crocodile, and is given some of the beasts gifts.

- Grants the Low Speech (reptiles) trait
- The wearer may swim at 5x Speed
- Grants +1D to charges and pushes (on land or water)
- Disguise (Ob 1) as Crocodile (suggested by Luke)

