North Mona

The Holy Isle of Mona lies south of the great continent of Alarius, and is itself of sub-continental scale, being around 1,000 miles northwest-southeast by 300 miles southwest-northeast (1600 by 500 kilometres or so). It lies astride the equator, between roughly 11 degrees North latitude and 1.5 degrees South, in the Kanein Ocean between Doriant, Kentoria and Alarius, with the great Alarian island sub-continents of Lizard Isle far to its west, and Hermit's Island to its northwest.

It is a strange and mysterious place, even for the magical land of Alarius, as the Isle itself is Holy, without being tied to any specific deities or religions. The land radiates a peaceful tranquillity that promotes spiritual recovery and general healing in a quietly unobtrusive manner for those that live here or visit it. Its power is immense for all that, as no contact with outside agencies, such as deities, demons, or other patrons is possible on the Isle, or within roughly 100 miles of its shores (150+ km). In addition, many magical spells and items, especially those involving aggressive, offensive or controlling actions, or instantaneous travel, will not function at all within this same region. Even those of a more protective, healing or helpful nature often have lessened effects. More than this, the dead stay dead here, as the undead cannot exist within this zone.

However, animals and people are still able to hunt for food, fights and squabbles occur, and the usual run of problems are as liable to happen here as anywhere else. Creatures, especially of different humanoid types, that would tend to be aggressive towards one another, may still be so, although often in a lessened manner, and less frequently than normal. All such reactions are calmed and reduced by the Isle's power.

Curiously, there are many ruined, and some still intact, temples and shrines scattered across the land, along with other ruins, mostly of an age and nature suggesting they have been in-place for an extraordinarily long time. Naturally, not all the ruins are especially recognisable, although the remains of round stone towers seem a recurrent feature in the hills of North Mona.

The more intact temples and shrines are sometimes still in use, as places of familiar comfort for visitors especially, commonly maintained by elderly former priests from other parts of Nibirum, or hermits of no fixed affiliation. The "working" temples among these are always signified by a pair of statues at each entrance, nearly always of the traditional Isle form, as standing humanoid guardians, for all their appearances can be quite varied beyond this. These sites tend to be concentrated nearer the main population centres - including Monaca, Minaki, Notigi, Waska and Klava. Such statue-making is a long-established part of Isle life.

Most folk wear a painted star of varied form and colour in the middle of their foreheads here, whether natives or visitors, although this practice is less common in North Mona. Given the tropical climate, simple robes and loincloths are favoured as clothing. Here in the North, an open-fronted, thigh-length, sleeveless, thin fabric, overcoat-like garment is often preferred, one that has numerous pockets for holding small items. Overt displays of armour and weaponry are actively discouraged.

Much of North Mona is known for its high-quality linen and flax production, and consequently textile manufacture, its traders, its fine honey and mead, and statue-making. The **Amethyst Jungle** between Waska and Notigi (including the stretch of Hollow Tree Jungle southeast of the Indin River estuary) is noted for its Tempearl Trees and their valuable decorative wood. The hills here have mineral and metal deposits in places, some of which are and have been mined, as well as quarried for stone. Offshore-coastal and inland-sea fishing supports various of the shoreline settlements. **Silis Lake**, largest of the Isle's inland seas, and the **Swift River** that connects it to the sea at Trader's Bay are both navigable and tidal, while **Labas Lake**, is a great freshwater inland sea, separated from the southern reaches of Silis Lake by the Copper Hills. Two main rivers, the Indin that runs west to Notigi on the Crocodile Coast, and the Amethyst, which flows southeast to the sea of Horned Bay at Waska, drain out from Labas. Tree cover is relatively sparse across much of the vast expanse of the central hills, commonly scattered deciduous and cedar woods on the higher parts especially, with the denser tropical jungle woodland primarily concentrated towards the more southerly regions, and in the two northernmost promontories. The Great Green continues off the southeastern map edge here into the northern part of the separate South Mona map in the Atlas.

Part of the general notes for Mona as a whole were determined using random tables and other information in Mythmere Games' *Tome of Worldbuilding*. Ideas for smaller-scale features across the map were drawn or adapted from, and suggested by, random tables in the Shadowdark RPG rules (by The Arcane Library), and the *Dread Thingonomicon* from Raging Swan Press, with some place-names derived from tables in the *Nomicon* from Mythmere Games.

Red-Labelled Places

Abandoned City: In the extreme southeastern map corner, near the western shore of the unlabelled freshwater Yellow Turtle Lake (detailed on the separate South Mona map), these are the substantial stone ruins of a former city-sized settlement of ancient design, previously known as Weymoro. Tumbled and overgrown by the Great Green, these remain a significant, and quite well-known, landmark on the Isle, for all few would dare venture there now, thanks to real or imaginary perils preserved in numerous old stories of the City's wealth and luxury, and what befell it to cause its collapse into ruins. The remnants of numerous smaller ruined settlements can be found scattered across the jungle for a considerable distance south and southeast of the City itself, as far as the banks of the Purple Flower River, some 30 miles or more away (50 km; on the South Mona map), all of similar age, suggesting this had been a great civilisation once.

Ant Tower: One of the landmark features along the main Pilgrimage Route through the Great Green (the dashed green line passing by this site; see the South Mona map for more details on these Routes), this is a huge, thus literally towering, ant's nest. While large by typical standards, these are not giant ants, for all they may be seen foraging for quite some distance around in the jungle. If disturbed, they may swarm in attack.

Bald Hill: This is a large, conical hill in the eastern Copper Hills, treeless and virtually vegetation-free, surrounded by a black, peaty "moat" of watery marshland. Stunted vegetation survives along the Hill's side of this "moat", with healthier vegetation on the other side all around it. Tales suggest that a legendarily mighty Lich once dwelled beneath the Hill, with three tunnels that led to its lair there.

Bat Mine: In the eastern Golden Hills, south of the westernmost reach of Silis Lake, these are the overgrown remains of a failed mining venture, with ruined stone structures around the Mine's entrance. Its main passageway descends steeply into the hillside cliffs, before ending in the collapse that brought the Mine's demise, around 100 feet (30 metres) down. Several side-galleries run off this main shaft, though none go very far. A great many bats now live in the Mine, hunting across the hills and woods nearby by night. Local legends whisper that the place must also be the haunt of ghosts and vampires.

Black Obelisk: Deep in the Great Green jungle northeast of Waska stands this 80 ft tall (25 m) strange Obelisk of shimmering black stone. It is said to refract and reflect the moonlight into rainbow colours, that it radiates heat by day, and yet frost crystals spiral down its length at night. Animals seem to avoid it.

The Burrows: Extensive agricultural lands and settlements extend east and southeast along the coastal plain from Waska around Horned Bay in the map's lower right corner. In places, the jungle vegetation of the Great Green has been cut back to create fresh farmlands. The Burrows stand at the northern edge of one such cleared area. Dug into a large, artificial hill that was originally a great stone-lined barrow mound, it has been greatly expanded by a family of farming Gnomes. A long, grassy meadow stands in front of it to the south, where they graze cattle, with fruit trees in orchards and vegetable gardens closer to their homestead. Despite being friendly to all and welcoming of guests, rumours of their supposedly odd doings persist among the local communities nearby.

Chapel Isle: Lying offshore from the unlabelled Tower Point in the northwestern Horned Bay, the crumbling ruins of an old, small, stone chapel are barely visible through the trees on its jungle-wooded, cliff-sided hilly Isle. Local rumours in the Waska district suggest there are ancient crypts lying below the ruins.

Coral Point: The headland at the western mouth of Trader's Bay in the Isle's north (Leopard Cape is its eastern counterpart), is almost the northern part of the Red Bird Promontory, only slightly south of the true northwestern tip at Banner Cape. Atop the coastal cliffs here stands the Hermit's Tower, a partly ruined small keep with an attached lighthouse tower. The Hermit who lives here, Ubalt, spends his days working to slowly rebuild the ruin. He welcomes visitors, but refuses all help in his work, as he sees it as atonement for some past deed he refuses to speak of.

Crystal Isle: Usually considered the southernmost end of the Crocodile Coast on the Isle's western shore, the main feature of this offshore island is a remarkably tall, vaguely triangular, conical rock-pile on its highest point, in the Isle's south. This casts a long, deep shadow. At the pile's top is a huge, fantastical beast's skull, perhaps that of a dragon or wyvern, according to local seafarer's tales.

Enigma Tree: Atop the red sandstone cliffs on the northwestern side of Red Lake, near the northwestern tip of the Red Bird Promontory in the west of the map, this is a huge, hollow, blackened, tree trunk, nearly 100 ft across inside (30 m), yet one which still lives, and regularly puts forth fresh leaf-growth. Myths hold that a

portal to the Faerie realm lies somewhere within the trunk. It is an easily recognisable landmark, and a well-known meeting place for locals, as a result.

Eye Stone: In the western fringes of the Amber Jungle south of Red Lake on the Red Bird Promontory, near the east bank of one of the rivers that feeds the Lake, stands a great, square-section, grey stone obelisk, around 100 ft tall (30 m). Towards the top of its west-facing side, a large, single, lidless eye has been carved, as if gazing perpetually towards the coast of Lantern Bay, some 30 miles away (50 km).

Flame Hills: A large swathe of the low, central hills in the Isle's northernmost Pearl Promontory, roughly 20 miles west-east by 10 miles north-south (30 by 15 km), are evenly rounded in form, and are often alight with vast numbers of red, orange and yellow flowers, making the whole area seem as if on fire at times. Beneath the flowers and topsoil in places, chunks of granite have been mounded in barrow heaps at some ancient time. These are scattered all over this expansive region.

Flower Head: Opposite Monaca at the mouth of the Swift River at Monaca Haven, the southeasternmost head of Trader's Bay, is a narrow peninsula, culminating in this small headland, which is covered with mangrove swamps. A gigantic, ancient mangrove here forms a significant landmark, whose canopy partly conceals three ancient burial cairns, half-sunken in the swamp. The edge of the whole peninsula is ringed with reeds and masses of wild flowers year-round.

Frog Vale: In the northern Golden Hills, south of Monaca, this is the area surrounding one of the freshwater tributary streams flowing into the Swift River. It is marked by many tumbled stone blocks that once seem to have been parts of now-undefined structures here. Vine-choked, half-sunken menhirs dot the hills ringing the Vale. The Vale itself is quite muddy and prone to flooding, and a lop-sided stone ruin stands towards its western end, towards which leads an old, hardly discernible, processional way, marked by similar standing stones. What few locals there are tell of strange sounds from the valley when the waning gibbous White Moon stands overhead, which may or may not relate to more widely-distributed legends of an elder-times Queen and her Frogfolk courtiers, said to be doomed to spend eternity here.

Gale Pit: North of Minaki and the eastern reaches of Silis Lake, in the southern Gong Hills, a large, old quarry has cut this Pit deep into the hillside, providing much of the building stone for the settlements here in times past, and some at Monaca. Still used occasionally, strong winds tend to swirl around and over it. Travellers' tales tell of being suddenly thrust towards the Pit's edge when in the hills above it, as if by an unseen force.

Gypsum: A small settlement on the south bank of the Gazelle River estuary near the map's southeast edge, north of Thunder Plain, this seems little different to others of the farming villages in the Klava district. However, the fields here are all tended by glittering Golems made of gypsum, commanded by living humanoid overseers. Quite how these constructs persist magically on the Isle, or who created them, are equally unknown, but they have been here longer than anyone can recall, even in legends.

The Hanging Man: High cliffs form parts of the coast of Dent Bay on the north shore of Mona, which Bay runs between Broken Point and the great Lion Foreland. Roughly one-third of the way southeast along the Bay from Broken Point, this is a towering stack of rock, the same height as the cliffs here, around 200 ft (60 m). It looks as if it is leaning over towards the sea because of the way it has been eroded. At its base, a narrow shelf of rock still connects it to the mainland, which is submerged at high tide. On its inaccessible upper parts can be seen the mouths of a number of narrow caves that local legend holds to be the burial tombs of a long-forgotten folk hereabouts.

Klava: Largest of the southeastern settlements in North Mona, this small town has roughly 1,000 permanent residents on the mid Gazelle River in the northern Great Green jungle. The district around here has a number of farming and logging settlements, clustered near the River, with some small-scale mining and quarrying in the adjacent southern Bright Hills. Curious effects seem to congregate in the nearby region, especially downstream towards the Gazelle's estuary, 40 to 50 miles east of the town (65 to 80 km), and southwards, deeper into the Great Green and unlabelled Alabaster Spire Downs on and near the eastern map edge.

Last Rest: Almost in the southeastern map corner, this is a small, ruined shrine building, standing in the Great Green by the north bank of the unlabelled Dancing Feather River, in the angle formed by a smaller tributary stream close by. Broken coloured glass still glimmers among the vegetation from its former windows, suggesting this was once a finely-appointed structure. No indication of what, if any, deity it was originally dedicated to survives here. Travellers following one of the Pilgrimage Routes (see the Ant Tower notes on these) often leave their own small tokens here, and the collection of items, including deity and other figure icons and statuettes, indicates this to be a long-established practice at this little landmark.

Minaki: Largest of the inland settlements on Mona, this is roughly town-sized in extent, with around 1,500 permanent inhabitants. Situated on the north side of the main eastern reach of the vast Silis Lake, it has a decent deepwater port and modest harbour, with ships plying across the Lake and down the Swift River to Monaca, though rarely further. Mining and quarrying continues in the nearer Gong and Copper Hills, along with agriculture in the fertile plains by the Lake, mostly within 25 miles (40 km) of Minaki, and fishing on the Lake. Some logging is carried out on the eastern fringes of the settled region particularly. Sheep and goat grazing extends into the poorer-quality land of the hills as well. Smaller settlements, often just a farmstead or so, are strewn about the Lake's shores elsewhere, too small to be illustrated on this map, mostly of fishers, farmers and hunters, along with a few hermits.

Monaca: This is the primary trading port for the whole Isle, situated near the mouth of the Swift River at the head of the great Trader's Bay. Monaca Haven is the river inlet where the deepwater port itself lies. Trade is carried out from here with all the other ports on the Isle (Notigi and Waska on the west coast, Port Deus on the far southern shore of the separate South Mona Atlas map, and Minaki, inland on Silis Lake), and with places beyond, chiefly, though not exclusively, across southern Alarius. The port has an excellent sheltered harbour, with coastal beacons and a wooden lighthouse tower to guide ships. The town, most of which is surrounded by a wooden defensive wall, has roughly 2,500 permanent inhabitants, plus a further, very variable, itinerant population of traders, sailors, fishers, farmers, other workers and pilgrims travelling to and from the southern part of the Isle. The scatter of smaller settlement markers on the map gives an indication of the agricultural lands all around the town, extending roughly 80 miles west and 100 miles or so north from Monaca (130 to 160 km) around the fertile coastal plains of Trader's Bay, and nearly 60 miles inland upstream along the Swift River (100 km), chiefly on its northern bank. Mostly small-scale mining and quarrying takes place in parts of the Gong and Golden Hills nearby, together with some logging in the Amber and Vepron Jungles closer to the settled lands. Native Islanders all across this region call themselves Monacans, albeit with local variants typical of such a substantial area.

Notigi: Sited on the north bank of the Indin River estuary, where there is a useful deepwater port and harbour, Notigi hosts about 1,800 permanent inhabitants, trading with Monaca to the north and Port Deus to the far (off-map) south, forming one main stopover point for pilgrims and traders sailing to and from Port Deus. Woodland clearance of the Hollow Tree Jungle to the northwest has opened-up the coastal plains there to agriculture, extending some 80 miles from the town that way (130 km). Fishing and logging communities are found in this area too, with a few more fishing villages south of the estuary (little agriculture has been possible here previously). Inland though, more farming settlements have been established right along the Indin River to Labas Lake's northern shore, and on almost as far east as Poison Swamp along the southern edge of the Copper Hills. The Indin-Labas region is sometimes considered the breadbasket of Mona, as the large grain harvests from here help feed much of the Isle beyond this region. Still more farmsteads have been set-up in the northern Amethyst River valley, where it exits the southern tip of Labas Lake. All of these places, while independent of Notigi by distance (the furthest lie some 200 miles or more away, 320 km), are all loosely affiliated with it, and will trade with it from time to time using small river craft on the major watercourses. Freshwater fishing happens around Labas Lake, along with small-scale mining, panning and quarrying for various minerals and metals in the surrounding hills.

Poison Swamp: Northeast from the last farming settlements northeast of Labas Lake in the southeastern Copper Hills, this river valley is another of those among North Mona's hills choked by marshlands. In this case, primarily by a mangrove swamp. Somewhere deep within it (the locals are vague) is rumoured to be a stretch of foul-smelling water in a depression separate from the river, about half a mile in extent (almost a kilometre), which is avoided by all, including most of the wildlife. Twisted plants, stunted trees, and sickly foliage mark its edges. It is said strange-coloured creatures live in its slimy waters.

Red Lake: A large freshwater lake, or small inland sea, towards the northwestern tip of the Red Bird Promontory in the map's west, just in the northwestern part of the Amber Jungle. High, extensive, red sandstone cliffs surround most of it, with ancient, gnarled trees along their tops. A low, wooded island is in the Lake, and the area is well-known for its waterfowl and fish, although several monstrous fish are said to lurk in the depths. Whether this is true or not, the birds often seem to avoid the Lake's southeastern reach. On the northwestern rim of the cliffs stands the great Enigma Tree.

Slumberland: By the edge of the Great Green, where the jungle meets some of the ruins associated with the Abandoned City, very near the map's southeast corner, a great many flowers with heady perfume blossom, liable to lull breathing creatures into a, potentially permanent, deep sleep in this vicinity. The plants require the nutrients from decomposing bodies to continue thriving.

(Spirit Isle): Unlabelled on this map, as only part of it extends onto the southeast map edge, very close inshore in Horned Bay, east of the "Slumberland" label, this is actually an island-like promontory, detailed properly on the separate South Mona map.

Stinging Swamp: Amid the Dancing Hills southwest of Labas Lake, a long tributary stream of the Amethyst River passes through this extensive valley marshland. Stands of jungle woodland have been encouraged to grow-up towards its mouth, nearer the fertile agricultural lands of the Amethyst Valley south of Labas Lake, which the locals see as a barrier, keeping the Swamp's many biting and stinging insects away from their lands. The Swamp itself is indeed notable for such insects, and its sucking, oozing muds, although there are several drier islets too, where hermits, wanderers or outcasts occasionally make their homes.

Thunder Plain: An area of the tall grassland coastal plains on, and extending some distance off, the eastern map edge. It appears no different to any other of the similar plains along the eastern side of the Isle. However, for unknown reasons, this area attracts thunderstorms and lightning strikes with unusual frequency. Fused-soil fulgurites may be found in many places in the ground, or occasionally on the surface, and burnt patches of grass are common features. Little larger vegetation survives long here.

Tower Isle: Standing off the northern shores of the Pearl Promontory in the unmarked Lone Isle Bay with its narrow, sandy beach, this is an uninhabited, low, rocky island, over which huge waves break during stormy weather, stripping away all but the most tenacious of seaweed vegetation. A round tower once stood here, of which only some fallen blocks, a circular surface footprint, and its flooded cellar still survive. No old tales describe why the tower was here, or what it once was.

Waska: More or less halfway along Mona's west coast, this small deepwater port on Horned Bay lies on the east bank of the Amethyst River's estuary, forming the capital of the extensive agricultural, logging and fishing lands that surround it. About 1,200 people live permanently in the town itself, with many more at the smaller settlements that extend around 140 miles to the southeast (and off-map here, 225 km), 25 miles to the northwest over the estuary (40 km), and 45 miles or so inland up the unlabelled River Chara to the White Mill (70 km). Many crops are grown here, with cattle and other domesticated animals. Trading with places to the north, and Port Deus in the off-map south, goes on regularly too, as the town is a useful stopover point for ships plying the western coast of Mona.

Watching Crag: A craggy island at the mouth of Horned Bay, extending just off the map's southeast edge. Its steep inland cliffs have numerous streams descending as waterfalls, visible from some distance off its shores, feeding a great many, mostly low-growing, tenacious, water-loving plants clinging to the cliffsides, and more substantial vegetation on the lower slopes. The rocky shore makes for a difficult landing from the sea, but there is a single, worn, slippery, stair cut in one place, which wends from the shore up and around the crags to the ruined tower on its highest peak. Commanding views across the Bay and the surrounding land and sea can be had from this summit.

White Mill: Just beyond the northern edge of the Great Green jungle in the southern Bright Hills northeast of Waska, this is a small hamlet consisting of a picturesque, large, white-walled mill-house and four substantial cottages. The Mill is on the unlabelled Chara, a steeply-descending tributary of the Amethyst River, whose course has been gently altered to allow the water to power an overshot wheel. The miller produces very fine-quality flour, widely-used by folk in both the Waska and Klava districts (the Mill is near the watershed between the Amethyst and Gazelle River systems), and exported still further afield around the Isle. He is also a keen herbalist and alchemist, using the Mill to power some of his alchemical works. The cottages house his workers, apprentices and their families, and the place is always busy, including with carts bringing grain for milling and taking away ground flour.

Windy Isle: Some distance offshore of the north coast in Dent Bay, this is a substantial island with a rocky ridge running along its longest axis. Painfully strong winds bluster across the Isle quite frequently, leaving only low-growing, hardy vegetation in places, including in the more sheltered spots the fractured rocks create. The widest and deepest of these, near the ridge's crest, has formed a large, sunken hollow, the most sheltered spot on the whole Isle. Ruins of old wall-lines and post holes indicate this great hollow was once home to a significant settlement, now long gone, as the Isle has no humanoid inhabitants currently.