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# 1 The Marches



?Pride in small things, loyalty to great ones?

For centuries, the Marcher Households have followed the beat of the Empire's drums. Aided by the Landskeepers' magic and inspired by the faithful of the monasteries, the Marcher armies have been built from the strength of the yeomen's arms, the courage of their hearts, and the knowledge that they fight for the green fields of home. Stubborn as stone, they give ground grudgingly, and even if they are forced to retreat they are not defeated: they will return.

The Marches are the guts of the Empire. They may not be pretty, but they are vital. They fought a war of independence long ago and they will die, one and all, before they give up their freedoms. None stands above another but that their neighbours put them there. Everything they have they have taken with blood and sweat, every season, their prosperity dragged from the soft earth with every harvest. Nature is their servant, bound and shackled with looming menhirs and iron ploughshares, a hound tamed and set to lie before their doors.

They understand sacrifice - not the easy sacrifice of blood for the harvest, but the hard sacrifice of lives spent day after day working for the future.

The Marches is the sleeping giant of Empire. Enemy boots churn up the rich soil, as the dog days of summer give way to the cold dawn of autumn ? and to war.

Hearth and home, loyalty and land. Rivalry, pride and a nation of traditions. Sentinel hills, silent marshes, and standing stones that mark their dominance over the fields. Generation to generation tilling the good, dark earth as their forebears did, and reaping the harvests that feed all the Empire.

Hered the Wakened, Memories of Home

## 1.1 Five things about the Marches

- **Land matters above all else.** Control and ownership of the land influences every aspect of Marcher life, most especially politics and magic.
- **The have deep roots and long memories.** Proud of their history and the long rivalries between Households, they never forgive a grudge.
- **They're fiercely independent, proud and stubborn.** They solve their own problems and stand their ground to defend what is theirs.
- **They're governed by consent.** They choose their leaders; Marchers are led not ruled. Everyone is born equal and respect is earned not demanded.
- **They hold their traditions dearly.** This is a land that dislikes change for change's sake, a land comfortable with routine, where Imperial Virtues are just plain common sense.

## 1.2 What the Marchers are not

- **Pagans.** The Marchers use magic and hard work to tame and control the land; they subjugate it to their will, they don't worship it. The Landskeepers draw on many of the visual imagery of druids, but they are a core part of the agricultural Marcher society, not a throwback to an earlier age.
- **Authentic.** The Marches is a low-fantasy nation designed to allow people to use the extensive costume resources of the War of the Roses and the Hundred Years war. However the Marches is still a fantasy nation, owing as much to *The Wicker Man* (1973) or Pratchett's Tiffany Aching series as the Ellis Peters' Cadfael stories or the Cousins' War; this is no place for arguments about historical authenticity.

## 1.3 The nation



### 1.3.1 Core brief

- The people
- Culture and customs
- Look and feel

### 1.3.2 Further reading

- History
- Leadership
- Military concerns
- Economic interests
- Religious beliefs
- Magical traditions
- Hearth magic
- Lineage and species attitudes
- Territories
- Children
- Music
- Costumes
- Tales

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