

Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth

Exhibition at the Bodleian Libraries, Weston Library

1 June – 28 October 2018. Book tickets at: <https://tolkien.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>

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Filename: Photo of JRR Tolkien aged 19

Tolkien was an able student and on his second attempt he won an exhibition to study Classics at Exeter College, Oxford. He was photographed in Birmingham, aged 19, shortly before leaving school and embarking on his university career. He had enjoyed his time at King Edward VI School, excelling in languages and in debates, performing with gusto on the rugby pitch and in theatrical productions, and had been at the centre of a group of close male friends. He may have felt some trepidation on leaving school but university life was to continue in much the same vein.

Shelfmark: MS Tolkien Photogr. 4, fol.16

Credit: © The Tolkien Trust 1977

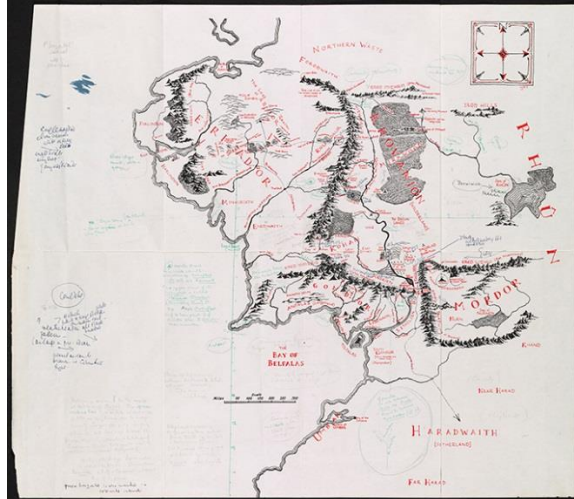


Filename: Photo of JRR Tolkien in the Botanic Gardens, Oxford

A portrait of JRR Tolkien taken on 9 Aug 1973. This was the last photograph taken of Tolkien in the Botanic Garden, Oxford, next to his favourite tree, the Pinus Nigra. He died less than a month later.

Shelfmark: MS. Tolkien Photogr. 8, fol. 122

Credit: © The Tolkien Trust 1977



Filename: Annotated map of Middle-earth

This general map of Middle-earth was included in the first two volumes of *The Lord of the Rings*, an essential guide for readers navigating through the then unfamiliar world of Tolkien's Middle-earth. In 1969 Tolkien collaborated with the artist Pauline Baynes to produce a poster map of Middle-earth. His annotations reveal extraordinary details of his conception of his imaginary world, and its association with the real world. The map reveals that Oxford is on the same latitude as Hobbiton. The recently discovered map was acquired by the Bodleian Libraries in 2016.

Shelfmark: MS. Tolkien Drawings 132

Credit: © Williams College Oxford
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At 11 I put on my gown and braced myself
for an ordeal I have long shelved: that is going
to register myself and take the oath
at the Bodleian Library as a reader.
I was received better than I expected
- they are very rude to some people -
and then went on to the Radcliffe Camera
[the Public Reading Room the Bodleian] to
register myself there. You have no idea
what an awesome and splendid place this
library of wonderful manuscripts and
books without price is little one. The
actual buildings too are immensely ancient
too as well. I must take you to see it
some time my darling

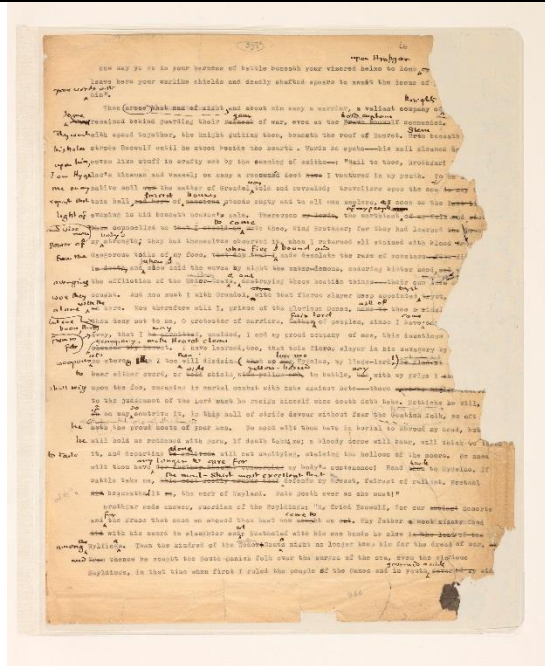
Filename: Bodleian reader oath letter

At the beginning of his third year at Oxford, Tolkien went to register as a reader at the Bodleian, the main university library. He wrote to his fiancée, Edith:
'At 11 I put on my gown and braced myself for an ordeal I have long shelved: that is going to register myself and take the oath at the Bodleian Library as a reader. I was received better than I expected - they are very rude to some people - and then went on to the Radcliffe Camera [the Public Reading Room to the Bodleian] to register myself there. You have no idea what an awesome and splendid place this library of wonderful manuscripts and books without price is little one.'

This letter has never been published before.

Shelfmark: Tolkien family papers. Letter to Edith 3 Nov 1913

Credit: © The Tolkien Trust 2018



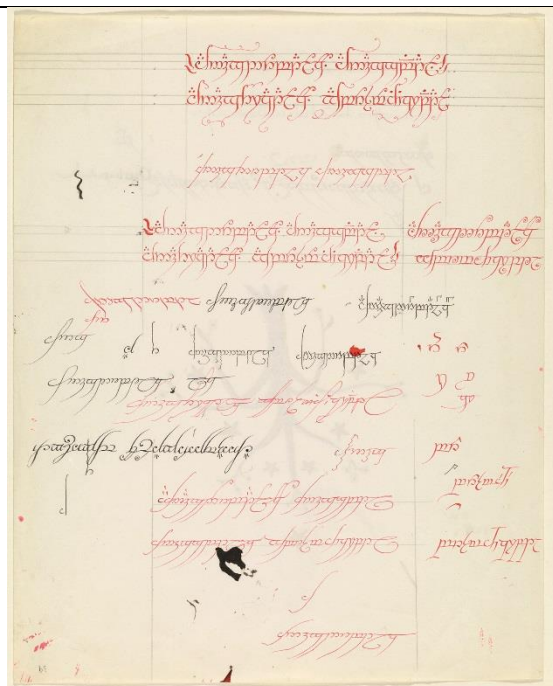
Filename: *Beowulf* typescript

This long alliterative poem written in Old English at the beginning of the 11th century, was a work of huge importance to Tolkien. He started studying Old English in 1913 as an undergraduate at Oxford, and he continued to study, discuss and teach *Beowulf* for most of his working life, first at Leeds University, and later at Oxford. His prose translation of the poem was completed about 1926, shortly after taking up the position of Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford. It is almost as badly damaged as the original 1000 year old manuscript of *Beowulf* held in the British Library, which was damaged by fire in the 18th century.

This document has never been displayed before.

Shelfmark: MS. Tolkien A 29/1, fol. 66.

Credit: © The Tolkien Trust 2018



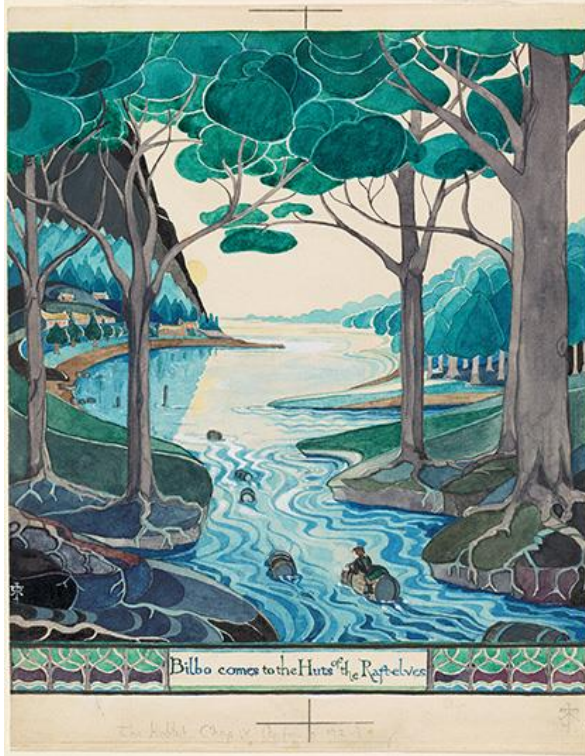
Filename: The Fire-writing

Frodo... saw fine lines, finer than the finest pen-strokes, running along the ring, outside and inside: lines of fire that seemed to form the letters of a flowing script. They shone piercingly bright, and yet remote, as if out of a great depth. 'I cannot read the fiery letters', said Frodo in a quavering voice. 'No', said Gandalf, 'but I can. The letters are Elvish, of an ancient mode, but the language is that of Mordor, which I will not utter here.'
[The Lord of the Rings, Book I, ch. 2]

Tolkien experimented with many different styles of Tengwar, the Elvish language, before selecting the most appropriate one for the lines of the ring verse. The lettering used in the book most closely resembles the two lines in red, bottom centre.

Shelfmark: MS. Tolkien Drawings 90, fol. 39r

Credit: © The Tolkien Trust 2015



Filename: *Bilbo comes to the Huts of the Raft-elves*

Bilbo comes to the Huts of the Raft-elves, a watercolour that Tolkien painted as an illustration for the first edition of *The Hobbit*, published in 1937. It went on to be included in numerous other editions of the book. In the image, Bilbo is seen sitting astride a barrel floating down the forest river, having helped the dwarves (who are hidden inside the wine barrels) to escape from the dungeons of the Elvenking. This was Tolkien's favourite watercolour and he was disappointed to find that it had been omitted from the first American edition.

Shelfmark: MS. Tolkien Drawings 29

Credit: © The Tolkien Estate Limited 1937

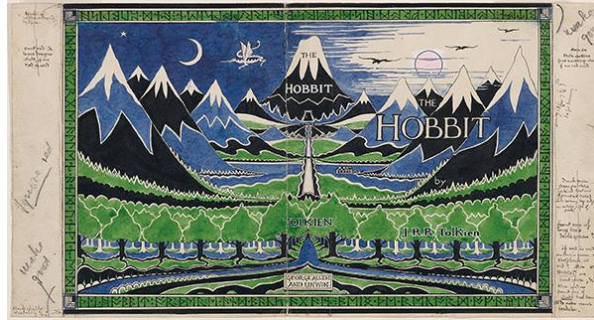


Filename: *Conversation with Smaug*

Conversation with Smaug, a watercolour painted by Tolkien in 1937 as an illustration for the first American edition of *The Hobbit*. In this image, Bilbo Baggins, rendered invisible by a magic ring, converses with the fire-breathing dragon, Smaug.

Shelfmark: MS. Tolkien Drawings 30

Credit: © The Tolkien Estate Limited 1937



Filename: Hobbit Dust Jacket

The final design of *The Hobbit* dust jacket. Tolkien not only illustrated *The Hobbit* but was also closely involved in its production process, designing the dust jacket and the binding. Tolkien's notes can be seen around the outside of the image. He was keen to use four colours: green, blue, black and red but this was too expensive and the publisher had the final say in the left-hand margin, 'Ignore red'.

Shelfmark: MS. Tolkien Drawings 32

Credit: © The Tolkien Estate Limited 1937



Filename: The Shores of Faery

The Shores of Faery, a watercolour illustration painted by Tolkien for his book *The Silmarillion*. This was his very earliest work on the legends of the elves, which was unfinished during his lifetime and was published posthumously. The painting is one of the earliest known items relating to *The Silmarillion*, and was painted when Tolkien was still an undergraduate at Oxford. In the midst of his finals, in May 1915, he drew this depiction of Kôr, the city of the Elves in the Blessed land of the Gods, Valinor. The white citadel is seen through the entwined branches of the Two Trees, bearing the light of the moon and the sun. It is clear from this painting that his legendarium was already well advanced.

Shelfmark: MS. Tolkien Drawings 87, fol. 22r

Credit: © The Tolkien Trust 1995



Filename: Roverandom illustration

The Gardens of the Merking's palace, an illustration that Tolkien completed for *Roverandom*, a bedtime story that Tolkien originally told to his children in 1925 about the adventures of a young dog. By 1927 Tolkien's growing family of three sons had sent his imagination in the direction of children's stories. A family holiday in Filey on the North Yorkshire coast was marred by the loss of his son Michael's toy dog on the beach. To calm the children during a particularly stormy night in their cliff-top lodgings, Tolkien told them the story of a real dog Rover, who was changed into a toy dog by a passing wizard. Rover had many subsequent adventures including a sojourn under the sea in the Merking's palace before being restored to his true form and to his loving family. This watercolour painting shows the underwater gardens that the fictional dog explored in the story. *Roverandom* was submitted for publication in 1937 after the success of *The Hobbit*, but was not published for over sixty years, finally being released in 1998.

Shelfmark: MS. Tolkien Drawings 89, fol. 4

Credit: © Tolkien Trust 1992