

# Table of Contents

<b>History</b> .....	<b>6</b>	<b>Desus Tai (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>50</b>
At The Shivering Mermaid Inn .....	6	<b>Emeloth (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>52</b>
The Creation Myth .....	9	<b>Freyo (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>53</b>
Timeline .....	10	<b>Grollob (Failed Scion)</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>RACES</b> .....	<b>11</b>	<b>Krullin (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>Dwarves</b> .....	<b>14</b>	<b>Morados (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>56</b>
Argon Dwarves .....	14	<b>Sollist (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>57</b>
Cape Dwarves .....	16	<b>Sonas (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>58</b>
Meurig Dwarves .....	17	<b>Toran (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>60</b>
<b>Elves</b> .....	<b>18</b>	<b>Veraeth (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>61</b>
<b>Gnomes</b> .....	<b>20</b>	<b>Wodan (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>63</b>
Gurud Gnomes .....	21	<b>Yara (Ascended)</b> .....	<b>64</b>
Hozz Gnomes .....	22		
Mûrkan Gnomes .....	22	<b>geography</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>Halflings</b> .....	<b>23</b>	<b>Arberdan</b> .....	<b>66</b>
Softbottoms .....	24	Demographics .....	66
Grizzlefeet .....	25	Culture .....	67
<b>Half-Elves</b> .....	<b>26</b>	The City .....	68
<b>Half-Orcs</b> .....	<b>27</b>	Places of Note .....	69
<b>Humans</b> .....	<b>28</b>	Major Organizations .....	70
		Surrounding Lands .....	71
		Regional History .....	73
		Hearsay .....	74
<b>CLASSES</b> .....	<b>30</b>	<b>Argon</b> .....	<b>74</b>
<b>Barbarians</b> .....	<b>30</b>	Demographics .....	74
<b>Bards</b> .....	<b>31</b>	Culture .....	75
<b>Clerics</b> .....	<b>32</b>	The City .....	76
<b>Druids</b> .....	<b>34</b>	Places of Note .....	77
<b>Fighters</b> .....	<b>35</b>	Major Organizations .....	78
<b>Monks</b> .....	<b>36</b>	Surrounding Lands .....	78
<b>Rangers</b> .....	<b>37</b>	Regional History .....	79
<b>Rogues</b> .....	<b>38</b>	Hearsay .....	80
<b>Sorcerers</b> .....	<b>39</b>	<b>Caern Tor</b> .....	<b>80</b>
<b>Wizards</b> .....	<b>40</b>	Demographics .....	81
		Culture .....	81
		The City .....	83
		Places of Note .....	83
		Major Organizations .....	84
		Surrounding Lands .....	85
		Regional History .....	85
		Hearsay .....	86
<b>PRESTIGE CLASSES</b> .....	<b>41</b>	<b>Estellond</b> .....	<b>86</b>
<b>The Shroudwalker</b> .....	<b>41</b>	Demographics .....	87
Brogan Deathstalker .....	42	Culture .....	88
		The City .....	89
		Places of Note .....	89
		Major Organizations .....	90
		Surrounding Lands .....	90
		Regional History .....	91
		Hearsay .....	92
<b>PANŦHEON</b> .....	<b>41</b>	<b>Hemdale</b> .....	<b>93</b>
The Creator .....	44	Demographics .....	93
The Scions .....	44	Culture .....	93
The Ascended .....	44		
The Afterlife .....	45		
<b>Ko</b> .....	<b>46</b>		
<b>Argarath (Scion)</b> .....	<b>47</b>		
<b>Barana (Scion)</b> .....	<b>48</b>		
<b>Chorolos (Scion)</b> .....	<b>48</b>		
<b>Mirimil (Scion)</b> .....	<b>49</b>		



The City .....	94
Places of Note .....	95
Major Organizations .....	95
Surrounding Lands .....	95
Regional History .....	96
Hearsay .....	97
<b>Hozz Le'Dayth .....</b>	<b>97</b>
Demographics .....	98
Culture .....	99
The City .....	100
Places of Note .....	101
Major Organizations .....	101
Surrounding Lands .....	102
Regional History .....	103
Hearsay .....	103
<b>Niire .....</b>	<b>104</b>
Demographics .....	104
Culture .....	105
The City .....	106
Places of Note .....	107
Major Organizations .....	108
Surrounding Lands .....	108
Regional History .....	109
Hearsay .....	110
<b>Port Hope .....</b>	<b>110</b>
Demographics .....	110
Culture .....	111
The City .....	112
Places of Note .....	112
Major Organizations .....	113
Surrounding Lands .....	113
Regional History .....	114
Hearsay .....	115
<b>Shroudgard .....</b>	<b>115</b>
Demographics .....	116
Culture .....	117
The City .....	117
Places of Note .....	118
Major Organizations .....	119
Surrounding Lands .....	119
Regional History .....	120
Hearsay .....	121
<b>Soberdan .....</b>	<b>121</b>
Demographics .....	122
Culture .....	122
The City .....	124
Places of Note .....	125
Major Organizations .....	127
Surrounding Lands .....	127
Regional History .....	128
Hearsay .....	129

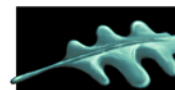
<b>Crimson Dominos .....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Crossed Swords .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Dire Hounds .....</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>Krayken .....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>Life-Givers .....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Shields of Valour .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Twofold Path .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>White Mages .....</b>	<b>138</b>

<b>appendices .....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Calendar .....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Iconic Characters .....</b>	<b>142</b>
Flynn Summersong .....	142
Mauss Tacite .....	143
Torrad Devoril .....	143
<b>Monstrous Societies .....</b>	<b>145</b>
The Black Renders .....	145
<b>World Map .....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Glossary .....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Index .....</b>	<b>157</b>

**sidebars, DM tips & tables:**

<b>DM Tip: Character Generation .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Dwarven Clans .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Dwarven Slayers .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Forsaken .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>DM Tip: Languages .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>DM Tip: Mage Hate .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>DM Tip: Paladin .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>The Shroudwalker .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>The Cult Of Reckoning .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Vengeance Domain .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Revelation .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>DM Tip: Currency .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>DM Tip: Magic Item Ratios .....</b>	<b>89</b>

<b>guilds .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Ash Hand .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Bonewatch .....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Brotherhood of Seven .....</b>	<b>132</b>



# Geography

## Arberdan

**Population:** 40,000 (86% Human, 8% Softbottom, 2% Half-Elf, 2% Gnome, 2% Other).

**Government:** Suspended monarchy, current power held by a Senate of noblemen and led by a Chancellor of State.

**Imports:** Exotic items.

**Exports:** Grains, livestock.

**Religions:** All Good or Neutral-aligned deities worshipped openly, Evil-aligned in an underground fashion.

Travelling east from Port Hope towards the rising sun, a wanderer will walk many long miles, through vast open plains, verdant valleys and gentle forests. Few inns or homesteads are to be found in these lands; the wilderness has never suffered under man's cruel thumb. The only signs that men even passed through this area are the solitary dirt road inscribed upon the land from the wheels of merchant caravans and the quiet tread of the lone traveler.

Those who walk this path and survive the dangers of brigands and beasts will eventually come to a land that has been tamed, the soft golden tapestry of wheat fields playing out to either side of the now more substantial road. Here the land is patrolled by companies of knights clad in bright steel armour, mounted on girded chargers, the pennants upon their lances snapping in the breeze. In the distance a large lake can be seen, mist rising from its mirror-like surface, and beyond that the lofty towers of Arberdan.

A day's travel around Neethus Lake will bring the wanderer to the massive oak gates of Arberdan, and the careful scrutiny of the city guard. After satisfying the guards' curiosity, the traveller will gain entry into this magnificent city. Cobbled streets wind slowly upwards, past small cozy houses and inns, through neat squares occupied by merchant stalls and bards who strum their lutes to the applause of children and their families. White banners hang from buildings, proudly emblazoned with a blue winged steed and four stars, the crest of Arberdan.

Walking further up the hills that the city is constructed upon, gazing westwards, the fleet of Arberdan can be seen moored in the deep waters of Neethus Lake. Higher still the cobbled streets widen slightly, houses and inns appear more spread out and mansions become larger. Here the nobles and upper class of Arberdan reside, each home almost a small castle. Here the towers that can be seen so far away are each capped with the heraldry of the family living within. The old blood of the Human empire lingers here, tradition and etiquette embraced by the whole populace, and travellers should be careful how they speak lest

they bring disgrace or dishonour upon themselves, for now they are in Arberdan.

## Demographics

At the very centre of the city, atop the hill Arberdan was built upon, stands a graceful castle, the King's home. Currently its vast halls and rooms are empty; since the great plague appeared out of the north and sank its filthy claws into the land, no Human has ever donned the crown, and Arberdan has had no king upon her throne. Scores and scores of noble families have lived within this city since its construction centuries ago. To all appearances the nobles are a unified group; a Senate of the highest nobles meets regularly to discuss items of importance to Arberdan, and the city is managed extremely well. But behind closed doors the tale is slightly different. The nobles all fight for the right to wear the crown and become the first Human king to again appear in Argyle. Alliances are formed and broken daily as each family struggles to increase their standing in the political hierarchy.

The leader of the Senate is the Chancellor of State. The Chancellor's family has always handled this position, and will continue to do so until a king sits upon the throne. Despite the power the

Chancellor wields, effectively running the city, he himself is forbidden from taking the crown as he comes from common stock, his family bereft of blue blood.

Arberdan is a prosperous city, with its exports far outpacing imports. Neethus Lake provides Arberdan with the healthiest freshwater fishing economy in all of Argyle, and the farms that cover the surrounding countryside provide grains and livestock for much of Greater Argyle. Within the city itself are many craftsmen well known for their quality work in many areas, including pottery, woodworking and masonry.

With the city being so self-sufficient in their day-to-day needs, imports are mostly limited to more exotic fare. Wines, clothing, meats and household items from far away dominate incoming trade. Arberdan also hires on many stalwart men who come to the city seeking employment; caravans, fishing fleets and ranches put tough demands on local militia companies.

Arberdan was constructed on the whim of the Mage-King Arberus, who, in his dementia, wanted a summer home in the form of an entirely new city. The slaves of Arberus built a huge city, a beautiful metropolis capable of holding upwards of eighty



thousand people, and today there are easily half that many living within its walls, even more if the surrounding towns and farms are counted. Because of the original intent behind the city and the large number of Humans that relocated south upon its completion it is no surprise that Arberdan is home mainly to Humans, their numbers making up over eighty percent of the population. The rest of the city is made up of a mixture of the other races. A Softbottom Halfling by the name of Dromin Loas currently represents the Scionic community in meetings with the Senate, and keeps relations flowing between the two groups.

Although the Scionic races are allowed to own property anywhere in the city, they have formed a small community on the southern edge of town. The Senate has no problems with this, as it keeps any racial tensions to a minimum, and allows people to avoid the area if they so desire whilst others are free to shop there for the unique services and equipment that are impossible to find elsewhere in the city.

Each morning the solemn but gentle toll of bells can be heard throughout the city, echoing along the stone walls of alleys and down the cobbled streets, calling out to the faithful in quiet tones.

Religion has always played a prominent role in Arberdan, a city famous for its rich collection of churches and temples dedicated to the noble and good Ascended gods, places where the worshippers of these deities could seek peace and solitude in times of trouble.

Most Humans in the city worship one of the more common and widespread deities such as Toran, Sollist, or Morados, and attend at least one service a week.

Even though the largest temples are reserved for the popular deities, shrines to all of the benevolent Ascended can be found within the city's walls. Because it is seen as a strong point of a person's character to attend religious services, even the less religious-minded citizens tend to pay lip service to a deity that might have some say in their particular profession. People that don't worship at all are often viewed in a less favourable light. Though this has no real penalties, status and how one is perceived in Arberdan is incredibly important, and a devout worshipper may receive favourable treatment from the people of the town.

Of course evil and malicious deities are also worshipped, and despite the city's attempts to root out their followers, it is probable that temples to these Ascended lurk throughout the city, well hidden from prying eyes.

## Culture

Nobility. Honour. Duty. These three principles echo throughout the city's streets, firmly entrenched in the lives of the citizens. The people of Arberdan try to live by these higher views, believing that the ability to be true to these concepts is what sets people apart from the creatures that roam the surrounding lands. By holding true to these values they ensure that a higher standard of

living is available to themselves and their neighbours. The saying 'Do unto others as you would have done to you' is alive and flourishing within the walls of Arberdan. Because of this view there are many schools of etiquette in Arberdan, to instruct both noble and commoner alike in the tenets of how to act in social circumstances. The benefits of this can be seen when walking through the streets, as good manners and courtesy are evident amongst the populace, with individuals respecting one another and violence rarely seen. All who come to stay within Arberdan are wise to adopt these ways or they can expect to be treated little better than barbarians.

Military service is seen as one of the highest forms of commitment to the principles of nobility, honour, and duty as there can be no greater sacrifice than to give one's life for one's city. Any person born within Arberdan's principality, or having lived within the city for a period of a single year, is able to enroll in the military. Upon entering the military a citizen is expected to swear an oath to serve for a period of five years, after which they can choose to leave or continue on, moving upwards through the ranks of the army. Many people join the army in the hopes of

being chosen to become a member of the Knights of Arberdan, the elite warriors of the town. The very concept of a knight contains a mystical and romantic tinge, as they serve a higher code of morals than others, never resting when there is suffering



or injustice within the land. The Knights of Arberdan are often invited to attend noble functions, and unmarried noblemen and women who wish someone worthy of their stature often woo them. In addition all who enter the Knights of Arberdan receive the prestigious title of Lord or Lady of the Sword.

There are nobles who do not agree with the view of others, and use their lofty position to take advantage of their fellow citizens. This is a terrible thing, as nobles are expected to lead and care for their fellow citizens. Sadly, the old blood has become tainted, and this combined with noble titles being available for purchase has seen many inconsiderate and callous individuals enter the highest tiers of social ranking. To try and stem the slowly rising tide of corruption, nobles caught abusing their power can expect to have either their family stripped of all titles and rank or be banished from the city.

Despite these grave consequences problems still occur, and nobles have been known to pay for their crimes in other ways, suffering the attacks of a group of thieves known as the Crimson Dominos, and having sensitive information revealed about their private lives. Despite intensive hunts, few if any of the culprits have been caught, and the vigilante group of thieves continues its work. Many of the commoners who suffered under the thumbs of nobles have been known to praise the secretive group, albeit quietly.

All four seasons come into play in Arberdan. Summers can be hot and humid, with sudden storms rushing in from Neethus Lake.

Winters are not long, but can be quite frigid. During the coldest periods portions of the lake have been known to ice over, and icebreakers need to be put into use to free up the harbour. While cold of that extreme is rare, winter always brings snow and ice to the city.

The citizens of Arberdan love to dress as they feel nobility should – even the lower class individuals. Great care is taken to try and observe the latest styles. Women most often wear dresses or extravagant skirts, while the men will dress in colourful shirts and breeches in the summer, and full-length trousers in winter. Blue, purple and red are popular colours in all seasons.

Each year Arberdan holds three major festivals, one during the seasons of autumn, spring and summer. The summer festival is by far the largest and is treated as the city's birth celebration, as the city was first established at the height of the summer season many centuries ago. Each festival is a huge event, with people from across all of Argyle travelling to watch and take part in the competitions. The most popular events are martial, from wrestling and all manner of armed combat and archery tournaments through to the famed demonstrations by members of the Twofold Path, the band of monks renowned across Argyle for their prowess in unarmed combat. There are also games of dice and gambling tents hosted for those who court Yara, Goddess of Luck. Scores of minstrels and bards can be found everywhere in the festivals, encouraging singing and dancing from the revelers. Many marriages are also performed at the festivals, as it is a popular time for many young men to kneel and ask for their lover's hand in marriage.

During the winter season there is no festival, but instead a Great Hunt, where the most experienced trackers prowl into the depths of the Dearken Woods that lie far to the east of the city, and search for the foul beasts that reside within. The competition is always dangerous, for the Woods answers to no mortal. Before signing up, participants are warned of the great perils that await them. The warnings all too often go unheeded, and in the shadowed depths of the Dearken many entrants meet death. The actual hunt lasts for one full week, and the entrant to return with the greatest trophy is declared the winner. They receive a purse of one thousand gold crowns, a free pass to the next competition, and their name at the base of the statue of Astoh Wieshin, the human who founded the Winter Hunt. Strangely enough the winner of the past eight hunts is a mysterious Elf who arrives out of nowhere to compete in the hunt. Leading an Elven steed, this Elf is always garbed in an outfit of winter colours, face completely obscured by a white silk veil that distorts the features underneath, the only visible weapon a massive white bow that is rumoured to be carved from the branch of a Yurl tree. The previous year the hunter trumped all competition by returning with the head and hide of a monstrous dire tiger, the pelt a full thirty-five feet long. Well spoken and courteous, the Elf always gives the prize to the needy in Arberdan before disappearing again, only to return for the next year's hunt.

Magic is officially frowned upon in Arberdan, in accordance with the city's desire to return Humankind to a level of respect among the Scionic races not seen in many hundreds of years. With the exception of the White Mages, Humans are not permitted to dabble in the arcane arts to any degree, and Scionic races may only perform minor cantrips amongst themselves. Use of magic more powerful than simple tricks is punished with prison time, and Humans who are suspected of being Shrouders are persecuted until either their innocence is proven or they flee the city.

## The City

Entry to Arberdan is by one of three means: by boat on Neethus Lake, by foot along the Merchant Road to the northeast, or the Hope Road to the south. Boats and barges coming into Neethus Harbour are from the farms and homesteads sprinkled around the lake, usually bringing trade goods into the city. The Merchant Road is a deadly and rarely-used trail, and travellers approaching from this road who are not merchants are carefully questioned. The Hope Road is the busiest road in the region, with all land-based traffic going to the south side of Neethus Lake, Port Hope, Niire, or Soberdan using the Hope Gate for entry and egress.

Neethus Harbour is a vast expanse of piers, wharves and jetties. Not only do all pleasure craft, fishing boats and merchant galleys dock here, but the Arberdan Navy has dozens of boats as well, patrolling the eastern half of the lake for pirates and those fishing illegally. The Harbour shoreline is the city's industrial center, and nearly all manufacturing and processing takes place in this busy area. This entire area falls outside the walls of the city, but is still heavily guarded and easily evacuated in times of trouble.

The Path of Sceptics starts far to the southeast in Soberdan and is joined by the New Trade Route coming from Niire before moving west to meet up with the River Theol. The Path then follows the river north until it joins with the Hope Road, which comes from the west, out of farmland and from far away Port Hope, ending at Arberdan's Hope Gate. The Hope Gate opens directly onto orderly avenues of shops with well-kept houses further off the main road. Arberus had the city designed with aesthetics in mind, not military defense: Arberdan is very easy to navigate, with just a few winding roads and narrow alleyways. The Mage-King felt that his powers would be the city's best defense. Unfortunately for him, he did not get the chance to test that theorem.

Arberdan was built for a vast population of eighty thousand, but the Plague decimated Humankind before any such number of people could take up residence there. With only half that population now in the city there are many empty buildings, both houses and shops. The council of Arberdan has these buildings sealed off so they may not be claimed by squatters, and the exteriors are maintained at the same level as inhabited buildings are. It can therefore be difficult to tell whether one is in a populated section of the city or not.

Parks abound in the city, and groves of fruit trees are scattered throughout, guaranteeing food and shade even for the unfortunate. Arberdan is laid out such that no matter where one lives in the city, shops and parks will be nearby to serve everyone. As such, the marketplace in Arberdan is considered small for a city of this size, and is more of a park than anything, with temporary merchant stalls set up throughout it. To find unique or specialized items one would shop at the marketplace, but for everyday staples there are a variety of shopping districts throughout Arberdan.

Since the entire city was created at once, rather than piecemeal, the underlying infrastructure is of exceptional quality. All main streets are lit with gaslamps. The sewage system is very well devised, and generally unusable by fell beings. Running water and indoor plumbing are fairly standard throughout Arberdan, although some citizens have let their residences fall into disrepair over the years.

Without question, the most impressive sights in Arberdan are the Great Spires. These are a series of massive ivory towers located near the middle of the city. Arching bridges connect the towers high above the ground, giving the Spires a very surreal appearance. There certainly is no sight like it in the rest of Argyle.

Originally built to be the residence of Arberus the Mad, the Great Spires now serve as the home of Arberdan's Senate. The largest of the Spires, however, is unoccupied, and guarded against squatters, while the smallest Spire is now a library.

Around the Great Spires, between them and the rest of the city, lay the Noble Estates, homes that have been held in the same families for centuries. Beautifully landscaped yards surround pristine mansions. The Noble Estates are patrolled more often than other areas of Arberdan, but crime is relatively low throughout the city anyhow, and these homes are rarely set upon by burglars, with the exception of the Crimson Dominoes.

### Places of Note

**Duradrome:** A vast hippodrome located between the Noble Estates and the rest of Arberdan, the Duradrome is used annually for athletic contests of all kinds, not just horse racing. Named after Duratess, the diplomat of old who also enjoyed horses to a considerable extent, the Duradrome has a seating capacity of more

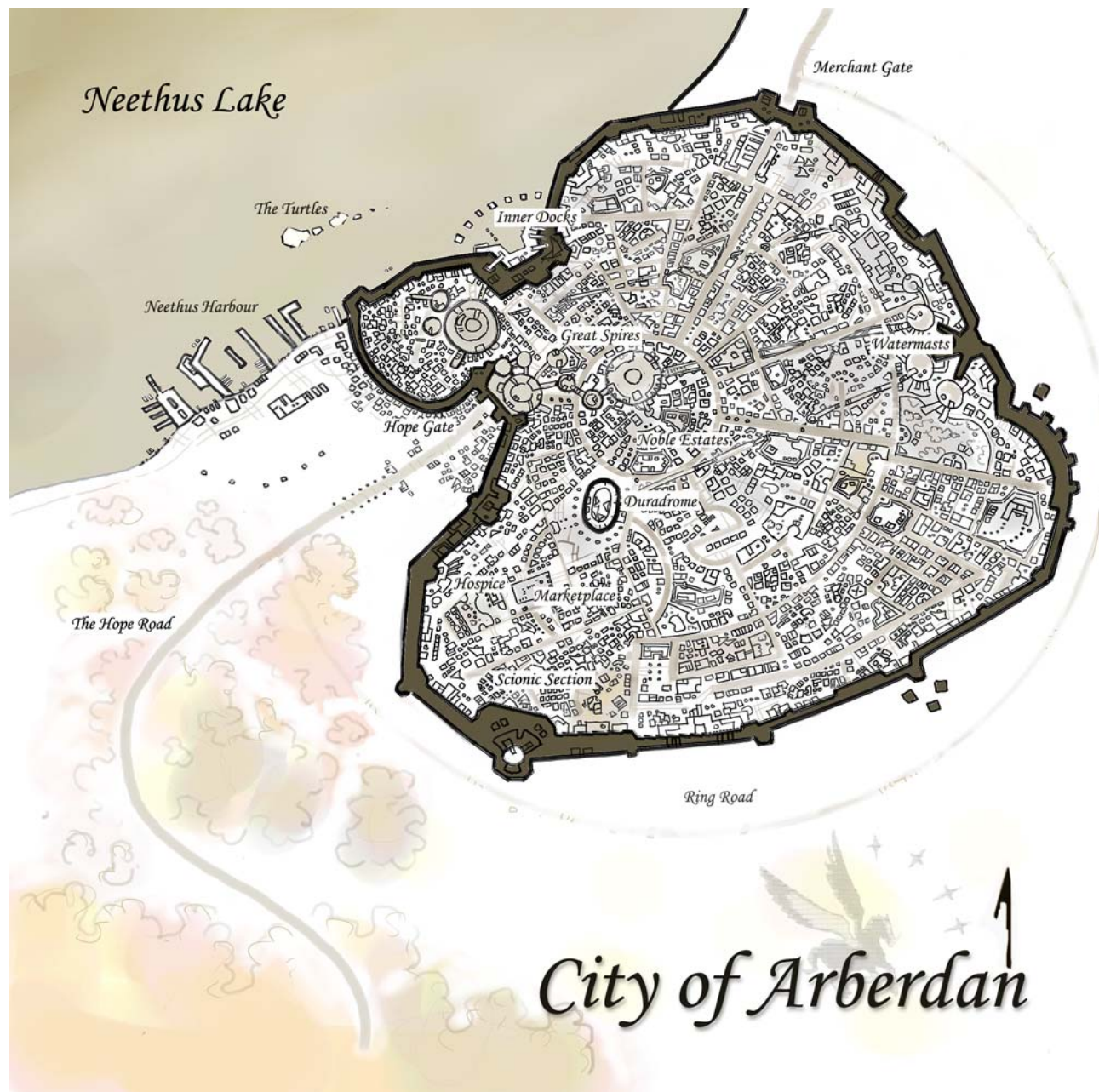
than fifty thousand, making it by far the largest manmade gathering area in Argyle.

The annual athletic competition known as the Tournament of Arms is held at the Duradrome for six days every summer. This event tests the skills of combatants at a number of levels, from hand-to-hand combat to archery and jousting, as well as battles between men and beasts. Horse races and dog races also take place here.

During the Tournament of Arms, the Duradrome also serves as a recruiting point of sorts, as representatives of almost all mercenary groups attempt to lure competitors into employment, something many of the contestants are often seeking.

**Eversong:** Eversong is much more than simply a local tavern; it is Arberdan's preeminent theater, concert hall and storytelling forum. It is also the closest thing Argyle's Softbottoms have to a cultural beacon.

Eversong is run by a troupe of Softbottom bards who call themselves the Jovial Mummers. While the core of this group is



## City of Arberdan