



# **Iter Tolkienensis: A Tolkiennymical Road Trip from Buckland (Worcestershire) to The Ivy Bush (Carmarthen, Wales)**

*Mark T. Hooker*

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The impulse to write *Iter Tolkienensis* came from a book by Steve Ponty: *Middle-earth in Magic Mirror Maps of Wales ... of the Wilderness in Wales ... of the Shire in England* (Matador, 2014). The insight of Ponty's book is that the maps in *The Hobbit* are the mirror images of the maps of Wales.

Ponty's insight prompted me to return to a question that I had raised in my article "The Linguistic Landscape of Tolkien's Shire" in *A Tolkienian Mathomium* (2006), where I equated the real-world Bredon with Bree Hill of Middle-earth due to both a correlation of meaning and of location. "The suggestion is intriguing," I noted, "and certainly begs to be followed up on, but that is another story."

*Iter Tolkienensis* is the story that I should have told, but didn't after my article. It starts in Buckland (near Evesham), proceeds west (Middle-earth east) to Bredon Hill, and then follows the road into Wales that is known in its latest incarnation as the M50 and the A40.

The name *Iter Tolkienensis* is an echo of the book title *Iter Britanniarum*, an extract of the Roman Roads of Britain from the *Antonine Itinerary*, a famous *itinerarium*, or list of the Roman stations and the distances between them along the various roads of the Roman Empire.

Though the selection of the route is admittedly arbitrary, it nevertheless offers a good assortment of real-world place names that can profitably be viewed through a Tolkienian lens, which is a linguistic perspective that begins with a name or a word, and then looks for its story in the real world with which Tolkien was familiar.

*Iter Tolkienensis* will, therefore, look at the meanings and stories of the place names that the route passes along the way, place names that might be translations or corruptions of those on a map of Middle-earth. *Iter Tolkienensis* passes places that could be Minhiriath, and the family estates of the Gamgee-s and Boffin-s; the Black Country, a rope-walk, and a lookout post; Rivendell, Esgaroth, and Eryn Vorn; before reaching The Carrock, Dol Guldur, and the Ivy Bush; to name but a few.

Also from this author:

*Tolkien Through Russian Eyes* (Walking Tree Publishers, 2003), published simultaneously in Russian.

"Frodo's Batman," *Tolkien Studies*, No. 1 (2004)

*A Tolkienian Mathomium* (Llyfrawr, 2006)

*The Hobbitonian Anthology* (Llyfrawr, 2009)


"Reading John Buchan in Search of Tolkien," *Tolkien and the Study of His Sources*, Jason Fisher (ed.). (McFarland, 2011)

*Tolkien and Welsh* (Llyfrawr, 2012)

*The Tolkienæum* (Llyfrawr, 2014)

*Tolkien and Sanskrit* (Llyfrawr, 2016)

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