

Brotherhood of Antiquarians

The Brotherhood of Antiquarians (*Societas Antiquarii*) is a group of explorers, historians and collectors of ancient artefacts loosely associated with the Temple of Verena based in Nuln. Many members join expeditions sponsored by the universities in Altdorf, Marienburg, and Nuln to the far reaches of the world. The Brotherhood trades in both arcane and scholarly knowledge as well as transporting rare and ancient items for further study.

The Brotherhood maintains a series of safe houses and drop sites along the southern trade routes from Nuln, both of which meet in Pfeildorf. The more commonly used road is along the River Söll, which then branches at the confluence of the River Hornberg. The path along the Hornberg takes one to the Dwarfhold of Karak Hirn and into the Border Princes near Mortensholm while the Söll route continues to Kreutzhofen where it separates again to three different paths: Icy Winter Pass (western Border Princes), Cave of Echoes (northern Tilea), and Montdidier Pass (southern Bretonnia).

The other, less travelled and more dangerous path from Pfeildorf follows the Upper Reik, past the Averland towns of Wuppertal, Loningbrück, Agbeiten, and Hochsleben. The road continues through Black Fire Pass to the village of Akendorf near Thunder River in the north-eastern Border Princes.

Once outside the confines of the Empire, the more daring members of the Brotherhood and their expeditions can choose almost any path – direct or otherwise –to their destination.

People native to the areas where these expeditions take place consider these scholar-explorers as nothing more than tomb robbers and despoilers. A number of the Brotherhood have met an unpleasant death at the hands of suspicious mobs or simply disappear into the wilderness never to be seen again.

There are other, graver dangers to members of the Brotherhood. Some of the items found in Nehekhara, Elven ruins in the Old World, or other sites of unidentified antiquity are known to be protected by curses and other types of evil magic or otherworldly powers. In some instances, danger can take a more mundane form such as Dwarf clans seeking vengeance for what they consider as the looting of their ancestors' tombs. To ensure that the gained knowledge does not die with the possessor of such objects, regular coded correspondence from the antiquarians is sent via trusted courier to a central repository administered by the Cathedral of Verena in Nuln.

Given the deadly nature of their work, the Brotherhood of Antiquarians are always looking for skilled and discreet individuals to act as guards, guides, scribes, artists, or labourers to assist in the group's endeavours. There are even times when one of the more promising hirelings might find themselves recruited to fill vacancies in the Brotherhood. Though most live semi-impooverished existences, members who prefer the excitement of adventure can obtain funding to journey to foreign and dangerous lands through the Brotherhood's fund-raising.

Schliemann's Shop of Curios

The more senior or scholarly members of the Brotherhood have been assigned to manage the various shops and safe houses used by the Brotherhood to move objects of interest to the Nuln repository. One example is Schliemann's Shop of Curios in Reikhafen district in Pfeildorf, the proprietor of which is Gregor Schliemann, a frail-looking, middle-aged bald man of medium height. He is a student of Imperial and ancient history as well as a collector of rare and exotic objects.

Most of Gregor's business transactions are conducted only by appointment after hours. His neighbours have long accepted that Gregor doesn't sell much of anything and the majority of his "customers" seem to be outsiders. They do find it odd that he has remained in business for as long as they can remember (over 25 years).

Old World Oddities

The membership of the Brotherhood of Antiquarians is not restricted to Humans. Khantria Lankirsdottir is a relatively young Loremaster (about 90 years old) who specialises in the study of the oddities of Human art. To facilitate her effort, Khantria runs the Odd World Oddities shop in the Merchant Halls of Karak Hirn with an eye more towards collection than selling. Visitors, particularly fellow members of the Brotherhood, are welcome to browse around the Old World Oddities; so long as they do not touch anything without Khantria's permission and supervision (the shop has a number of such warning signs in Khazalid as well as the various languages of the neighbouring Human kingdoms).

Khantria can usually be found at a desk with one of her newly arrived items, an iron stylus, and an open book with thin sheets of copper upon which she inscribes her description of the artefact as well as any stories she has collected regarding its purpose. A door with an intricate Dwarf locking mechanism behind Khantria's desk leads to stairs that descend into her private collection. This assembly includes potentially dangerous relics with little understood powers. Only highly-regarded members of the Brotherhood are allowed to examine these off-limit artefacts and works of art.

Wusterburg Wizards' and Alchemists' Guild

Not all stops along the network of the Brotherhood of Antiquarians are innocuous speciality shops. The Wizards' and Alchemists' Guild in Wusterburg is an important stopover for the initial evaluation of items making its way through the Söll river valley. For a fee or other consideration, the Guildmaster will examine items to determine whether any have magical properties and, if possible, uncover the nature (type of magic) of such enchantments.

Ever cautious, the Guild has been able to secretly arrange for Dwarfs from Karak Hirn to build a lead-lined secret vault deep beneath the Guild's underground library. The vault is not terribly large since any magically dangerous items that cross the Guild's threshold are only kept long enough for specialists from the Temple of Verena in Nuln to make their way to Wusterburg to retrieve them for further study and/or safe keeping.

Ziegler's Emporium

Located on the Marktplatz in Wissenburg, Ziegler's Emporium was opened in 2504 with the intent of its owner to become wealthy in the booming trade with the Border Princes and Tilea of artefacts, curios, and rare exotic items. In fact, many of the items Adolphus Ziegler collects for sale have their origins in Araby and the Southlands, from where it is rumoured that they are part of treasures looted by unscrupulous Old World explorers and adventurers, some of whom are members of the Brotherhood of Antiquarians. A number of the items Ziegler has currently in stock have been obtained from the area surrounding the Leopoldheim Penal Colony in the Southlands [**Apocrypha Too: Charts of Darkness**, pages 18-20].

Though Ziegler has not yet realised his dreams of wealth, he is pleased with his inventory of oddities. Ziegler is grooming his daughter, Dagmar, to take over the family business as he has been feeling his age of late.

Of course, Dagmar's inheritance assumes that the Brotherhood of Antiquarians does not learn that Ziegler is one of the beneficiaries of theft within their society.

Heigelmann's Auction House

Even organisations like the Brotherhood have a few less than scrupulous members who seek to use their positions to better enrich themselves. They feel little compunction about "misplacing" a number of objets d'art, which mysteriously show up in the collections of the obscenely rich.

Heigelmann's is one of the prominent auction houses in Nuln and holds after-hours, invitation-only auctions to sell foreign artefacts from ancient civilisations to the highest bidder. These public sales are attended by the representatives of the most affluent Nuln families and held irregularly in order to avoid notice by the curious (and the Brotherhood). These proceedings are also one of the few social events where Nuln's old moneyed nobility mix with the nouveau riche aristocrats on (more or less) equal footing.

Erwin Heigelmann is the proprietor of the establishment and chooses to know nothing of the manner in which his auction house comes to possess the historical items for sale. All arrangements are made by his personal secretary, Ludolf Bühren, who works with blind contacts in the employ of the Branmuffin family to coordinate the transport of the stolen goods to the auction house.