Tolkien, Nansen and the Island West of Ireland

Note 6 · Tolkien’s footnote on Hy Breasail

J.R.R. Tolkien, ‘On Fairy-stories’, in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 40, n. 2. Tolkien points to Fridtjof Nansen, *In Northern Mists*, vol. II, pp. 223–30, for the history and folklore of the island. The relevant passage can be read in the 1911 volume.

Read Nansen, vol. II, p. 223

Note 13 · Tolkien and Irish literature

Kristine Ainsworth Swank, *The Creative Uses of Irish Literature in Works by J.R.R. Tolkien* (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2025), chapter 2, pp. 62–65 and 86. Use those pages for the literary context of the island traditions. They complement Tolkien’s own footnote to Nansen.

University of Glasgow repository record

The Names Beneath the Mountain

Note 12 · The ring and the quarrel

William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon, trans., *The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs* (1870), chapters 27–28. Look for the quarrel between Brynhild and Gudrún and for what the ring reveals about the man who crossed the fire. Compare J.R.R. Tolkien, *The New Lay of the Völsungs*, VIII.32–33 and IX.6–11, and Christopher Tolkien’s notes on IX.9–10.

National Library of Scotland scan

Collecting a Text That Changed

Note 3 · The offer in the riddle game

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (George Allen & Unwin, 1937), chapter V, p. 85. Gollum promises Bilbo a present if he wins. In the revised chapter the promise is to show him the way out. Look at the reverse of the title page in a British copy before using the wording to identify the printing. See Wayne G. Hammond, with Douglas A. Anderson, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography* (1993), A3a and A3c.

Online transcription of the 1937 chapter

What Tolkien Heard in Finnish

Note 7 · Where the stress falls

Toponymic Guidelines (Institute for the Languages of Finland, 2025), §1.2.2, for primary stress on the first syllable of a Finnish word. Set this alongside Tolkien's separate rules in *The Return of the King*, Appendix E, I, 'Stress'. Tolkien's example *elentári* gives readers a concrete place to hear the difference.

Institute for the Languages of Finland PDF

From Hylestad to Tolkien

Note 3 · The portal and the church

The Valle and Hylestad parish brochure, *Hylestad kyrkje*, describes the surviving carvings from the older stave church and discusses how the dragon fight might have been read in a Christian setting. Read the possible Christian interpretation alongside the carved sequence. The brochure gives local historical context for the doorway.

Valle and Hylestad parish brochure

The Way Through Mirkwood

Notes 7 and 10 · Hervör’s view from the tower

Christopher Tolkien, ‘The Battle of the Goths and the Huns’, *Saga-Book* 14 (1953–57), pp. 141–63, especially pp. 143–44. Hervör sees the dust and the gleam of armour as the army comes out of the forest. The article compares her view with Bilbo’s climb in *The Hobbit*, chapter VIII. The two passages remain independently locatable in print.

Viking Society volume PDF

Note 18 · Tolkien’s illustration

J.R.R. Tolkien, *Letters*, nos. 13–14, May 1937. Compare the two images in Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull, *The Art of The Hobbit* (2011), figs. 47–48. See also their catalogue of published art and the description of the British and American editions in Hammond and Anderson’s *Descriptive Bibliography*, A3a and A3b.

Hammond and Scull’s art index