THE WARHAMMER WORLD

This section of the book introduces the background behind **Warhammer Fantasy Battle**. We shall be looking at the history and geography of the Warhammer world, as well as discussing some of the ways in which we have developed the world to meet our gaming needs. Like our own planet, the Warhammer world is a fairly large place, its history and geography are equally extensive and no-less involved. It would be foolish of us to try to write a complete description of the entire planet, because there simply isn't room in this book. Instead, we shall take an overview of the whole world, concentrating on one area in particular. This is the Old World, an area very much like late medieval Europe. Suffice to say, we fully intend to expand the concept of Warhammer to include the entire world, and several supplements are already in preparation.

WHY A WARHAMMER WORLD?

Games are always more satisfying when set firmly within the context of a credible society, especially when that society is situated within a carefully detailed world, complete with its own distinctive geography, history and political intrigues. When Warhammer was first conceived, only spartan details of its geography and history were known. We knew that the Elves lived on an island in the west, that the Dwarfs inhabited underground holds, and that humans built cities and were divided into many nations.

As we fought successive games and campaigns, Gamesmasters revealed many new facts about the world. Gradually, a coherent picture began to emerge as we fought battles over the Worlds Edge Mountains; we learned of the enmity between Dwarfs and Goblins, and of the fall of the ancient Dwarf realms. The Dwarfs and Goblins struggled for possession of the mountain passes, some of which acquired names: Blackfire Pass, Mad Dog Pass and Black Crag.

Warhammer supplements, **Blood on the Streets** and **Terror of the Lichemaster**, further explored the Old World and its human kingdoms. We now had a coherent picture of the Old World, and had mapped out its largest nations. Although points of detail were often revised or subsequently abandoned, the Warhammer world had evolved to a point whereby we were able to describe its general history, geography, patterns of settlement and inhabitants for our **Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay** game.

The Warhammer world presented here is the same world described in **Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay**. This world shares our own universe, although it is not our world either in its past or future. The description given here concentrates on material of special relevance to large scale battles. It does not include much of the special detail given in **Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay**, such as the religions and cultural idiosyncrasies of the various human nations. As the two games share the same world, players will find no difficulty in fighting battles as part of their roleplaying campaigns.

THE COSMIC BACKGROUND

The story of the Warhammer world begins with the story of the cosmos itself and with the ancient race that first explored it. They were called the Slann, a race of highly intelligent, amphibian creatures that evolved millions of years ago. Of their home world nothing is known, but it must have undergone substantial changes over the ensuing eons. In all probability it has long since ceased to exist.

This unimaginably ancient race spread throughout the entire galaxy, discovering many strange secrets and harnessing the unseen powers of the multiverse. One of their greatest achievements was the creation of spatial gateways between worlds, facilitating rapid travel over vast distances of space. Spatial gateways, or warp-gates, were constructed near habitable planets, looking very much like huge black holes against the firmament.

On entering a warp-gate, Slann spacecraft were plunged into the unknown realms of another dimension, a dimension whose substance comprised matter and energy in an unformed state. This was the dimension of warp-space known now as Chaos. Through this sea of disassociated matter, the spacecraft of the Slann rode the swirling currents within its depths. So it was that the Slann conquered the vastness of space and mastered the primeval galaxy.

Having gained access to warp-space, the Slann also gained access to all points of the universe and to other undreamt of aspects of the multiverse. By drawing strange powers through warp-space, the Slann were able to colonise and transform countless planets. They learned how to shift the orbits of worlds relative to their suns, how to shape continents and create conditions suitable for life.

The Slann evolved a standard form of global hydro-static control by means of continental alignment. As a result of their efforts, many of their worlds share a basically similar overall geography, a fact which continues to disturb intelligent space-faring races to this day.

On many worlds the Slann discovered living creatures. Some of these creatures became the subjects of genetic experiments. Newly created worlds became home to the offspring of these engineered creatures. Other worlds were found to have evolved life-forms which were dangerous or displeasing, creatures which were subsequently destroyed or altered to make them more useful. By this means the Slann created many of the galaxy's habitable worlds and seeded the galaxy with the ancestors of men and other humanoid creatures.

The fall of the ancient civilisation of the Slann happened, as far as can be discovered, simultaneously throughout the galaxy. Suddenly, they abandoned almost all of their worlds, their warp-gates fell into disuse and their lofty achievements were forgotten. On many worlds, Slann settlers degenerated to barbarism, on others they retained only a vestige of their once mighty powers.

This catastrophe resulted from a problem long-appreciated by the Slann, but one which they were eventually unable to overcome. This was the existence within the dimension of Chaos of powerful malignant intelligences. By opening up gateways between the material universe and that of Chaos, the Slann had unwittingly opened portals through which dangerous and horrific forces could move into the universe. The Slann learned how to bind these entities using magic, magic being itself the manipulation of unseen energies inherent in Chaos. Some of these entities the Slann could placate by means of sacrifice or ritual. Others could be kept in check only by the aid of those already won over. Many were impossible to sway and it was just a matter of time before something went disastrously wrong!

THE CREATION OF THE WARHAMMER WORLD

The Slann arrived upon the Warhammer world three thousand years before the collapse of their galactic civilisation. They found a planet whose slowly expanding orbit was taking it further and further into space. Animal and plant life had already evolved, but the encroaching cold threatened to end all life within a very short time.

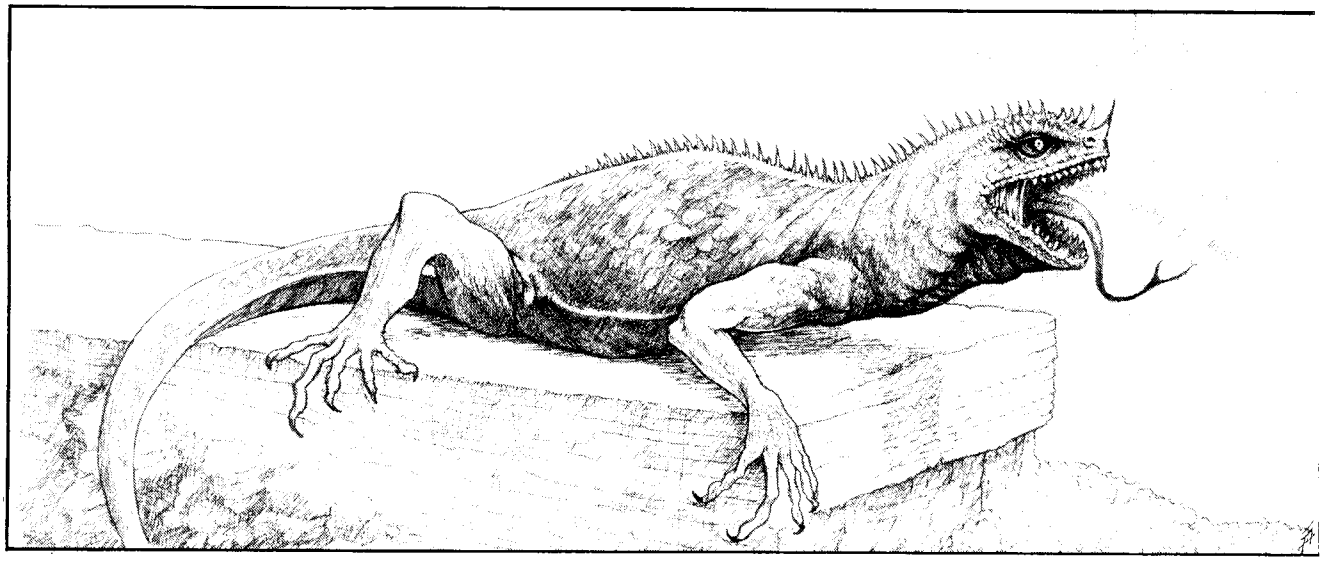
The Slann intervened by opening two warp-gates over the planet's polar regions, using the world's own magnetic fields to hold the gates in place. Through these gates they directed a huge construction fleet and set about the task of rescuing the doomed planet. Its orbit was brought closer to the sun and stabilised. Native life-forms were assessed and culled, new life-forms were introduced - possibly including the ancestors of humans, Dwarfs and Elves.

Over the next millennia, the ice-sheets retreated and the world began to bloom with verdant forest. The Slann kept a close eye on their creation, building a number of cities throughout the world, the principle of which was situated in the western continent. A thousand years after the arrival of the Slann, the planet was enjoying a stable climate, its inhabitants were thriving and the Slann settled down to monitor the results of their endeavours.

The Emergence Of The Elves And Dwarfs

Over the following two thousand years, the Slann encouraged the development of their seedling races. The first of these races was the Elves. During their early development, the Elves learned much from their mentors and quickly attained a high level of civilisation.

Whether because the Slann were dissatisfied in some way with the Elven race, or whether their original plan always envisaged a multitude of intelligent races on the world, other creatures were also encouraged towards civilisation. The Dwarfs were the next to emerge from the primal darkness of barbarism. Within two thousand years of the arrival of the Slann, the Dwarfs were building primitive holds amongst the Worlds Edge Mountains. The ancestors of humans, however, were still little more than animals and had yet to leave the jungles and savannah of the equatorial belts.



The Fall Of The Slann

Three thousand years after the Slann created the Warhammer world, their civilisation suffered a sudden and widespread catastrophe. This cosmic disaster affected the Warhammer world in a very direct way. The mechanisms controlling the warp-gates failed, the polar gates collapsed and the world was cut off from the rest of the galaxy. This event was to have far-reaching effects upon all life on the planet, effects comparable to a full scale nuclear war. As the warp-gates collapsed, raw Chaos in the form of unfocused energy, disassociated matter and primal intelligence was sucked into the material universe, causing a violent disruption of the space fabric. The tremendous release of raw Chaos matter into the world had several immediate effects:

The Incursions of Chaos

During the initial explosive collapse, the polar areas of the world were engulfed by a flood of Chaos material. Everything enveloped by the explosion was reduced to its component atomic structure. The initial inundation destroyed everything in the north as far as what is now the Troll Country. As the violence of the collapse subsided, the area of envelopment shrank so that only the immediate polar areas remained affected.

These seething regions of Chaos darkness still plague the world today, and are known as the *Incursions of Chaos*. As the Chaos-stuff retreated, the shape of the emerging lands was formed, creating the northern landmass of Norsca.

The Creation of Creatures of Chaos

A second effect of the collapse was the materialisation of Chaos-matter into solid particles. Only within the dimension of warp-space is material able to exist in its chaotic state; once drawn into the material universe it automatically assumes solid form. Dust, stone and whole islands of solidified warp-material were hurled into the upper atmosphere where the lighter particles were caught by the winds and distributed throughout the globe. This material was warpstone and warpstone dust.

Where the black warpstone dust settled, animals and plants began to succumb to strange effects. Creatures mutated into new and horrible forms, animals began to acquire higher levels of intelligence, and intelligent creatures developed bestial traits. Everywhere the story was the same, an insane jumbling of life forms, mutation and insanity.

The Manifestation of Gods and Demons

The third effect of the collapse was the physical incarnation of the primal intelligence of warp-space. In the dimension of Chaos, this intelligence forms a random, flowing consciousness, a shifting multitude of will devoid of any permanent structure or identity.

Prior to their collapse, the warp-gates had long since been the source of supernatural disturbance, allowing the passage of Chaotic consciousness into the material world. Godlike or demonic entities had already 'leaked' through the gates, affording the Slann a chance to study (and learn how to placate) these powerful beings. With the collapse of the gates, a far larger influx of conscious matter was released.

In the material world this life-force was instantly split into myriad fractions of various sizes. The largest and most powerful fractions were able to draw upon the consciousness of creatures already inhabiting the world, creating themselves in the form of gods and demons. Such creatures retained sufficient energy to assume a variety of ethereal or physical forms, and to manipulate their energies to work magic. Just as their forms and powers were fixed as they materialised, so their personalities also became more or less fixed. In this way gods of various alignment were created.

As well as these powerful entities, lesser beings were brought into existence. Frequently these lesser manifestations were forced to adopt forms imposed by the more powerful amongst them, creating a whole pantheon of subservient demons and some independent minor demons.

The Manifestation of Supernatural Forces

The last effect of the warp-dust was to divert the natural life-forces of the material world, gathering and re-absorbing many of the living creatures into the morass of Chaos. This created a new type of creature whose will and life-force was derived from living, or once living creatures, but whose physical form was bound within supernatural forms. Creatures of this type are the undead and elementals.

GLOBAL GEOGRAPHY

Following the arrival of the Slann, the continental land-masses were re-aligned into their present shapes. This formed the basis for the Slann's hydro-static control system, with which they were able to create various climatic zones. However, the subsequent collapse of the warp-gates in the polar regions modified this plan to some extent, reforming the polar regions and shifting the balance of the system slightly. The results of this were to create volcanic activity in some parts of the world, notably in The Dark Lands and the Worlds Edge Mountains.

THE OLD WORLD

The Old World lies to the west of the Worlds Edge Mountains. It is bounded by the Sea of Claws to the north, the Great Western ocean to the west and the Southern Sea to the south. Its natural fauna is mixed forest in the north and central areas, with scattered forest to the south.

The Old World is inhabited by the most prosperous and outward looking

