

# Ashcroft

Ashcroft is a small, rural village located in a fertile area known for its rich soil and favorable weather conditions, but due to a prolonged drought, the crops in and around Ashcroft have failed, leaving the villagers without enough food to last through the winter. Despite the crisis, the villagers of Ashcroft remain determined to survive and are looking for any help they can get to weather the calamity and keep their community alive.

## Basic Information

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**Population:** 250

**Government:** Reeve Alder of Ashcroft is a fair and just leader who is well-respected by the villagers.

**Defense:** The defense of Ashcroft consists of a sturdy wooden palisade surrounding the village with a single gate, guarded by a small group of skilled archers and spearmen who are trained to defend the village against bandit and other threats.

**Commerce:** Ashcroft's primary method of commerce is farming, as the village is located in a fertile area with rich soil and favorable weather conditions that allow for the cultivation of crops such as wheat, barley, and vegetables.

**Organizations:** The shrine in Ashcroft is a small, simple building located at the center of the village, dedicated to the goddess of agriculture and fertility, adorned with simple decorations, and maintained by a local priestess. It is an important part of village life where villagers make offerings to the goddess.

## Important NPCs

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Below are some of Ashcroft's most notable non-player characters.

**Greta, the blacksmith.** Greta is a fierce and independent woman who takes great pride in her work as a blacksmith. She has a daughter who lives in a neighboring village, whom she has not seen in many years due to a falling out between them.

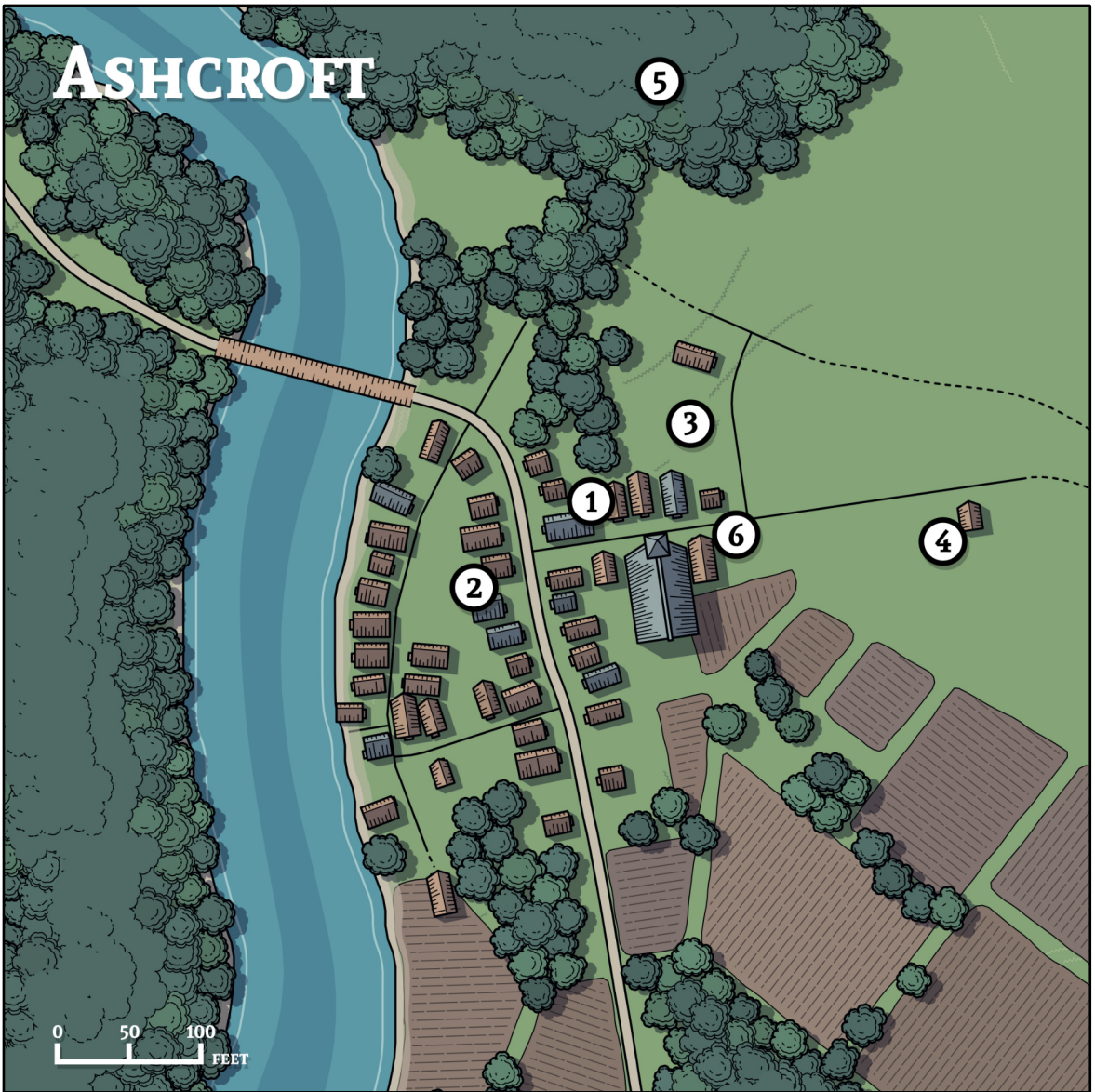
**Jakob, the baker.** Jakob is a kind and jovial man who is passionate about baking. He is in love with Livia, the innkeeper, but has been too afraid to tell her how he feels.

**Livia, the innkeeper.** Livia is a shrewd and resourceful woman who runs the Watering Hole Inn with a no-nonsense attitude. She is secretly saving up money to buy a farm outside of the village, where she hopes to retire.

**Marcus, the village healer.** Marcus is a gentle and compassionate man who is highly skilled in the healing arts. Unbeknownst to the other villagers, he has been secretly studying necromancy in order to try and cure a terminal illness that is afflicting his wife.

**Silas, the village sage.** Silas is an elderly man who is well-versed in the history and lore of the region. Lately, he has been communicating with a group of forest spirits in the nearby woods, and is secretly plotting to overthrow the village leadership in order to install a more eco-friendly and nature-focused government.

**Thalia, the village weaver.** Thalia is a quiet and introspective woman who is admired by the villagers for her skill and creativity. She has been stealing scraps of fabric from the other villagers' homes in order to weave a secret tapestry that tells the story of her life and experiences in Ashcroft.



As you crest the hill overlooking the village of Ashcroft, you are greeted by the sight of a humble but hardworking community nestled amidst the lush green fields of the surrounding farmland. The villagers move about their daily tasks with a sense of purpose and determination, but there is also an air of weariness about them, a hint of hardship and uncertainty that speaks to the challenges they have faced in recent times. Nevertheless, there is a sense of resilience and camaraderie here, a feeling of people coming together to weather the storm and emerge stronger on the other side. While you make your way into the village proper, the villagers greet you with wary but welcoming smiles, curious about the strangers who have come to their small corner of the world.

## Notable Locations

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Below are six notable locations in Ashcroft keyed to the map on page [x].

**1 - Watering Hole Inn.** The Watering Hole is the village inn, known for its cozy atmosphere, hearty meals, and comfortable rooms. A large stone fireplace dominates the common room.

**2 - Greta's Forge.** Greta's Forge is the heart of the village's industry, where Greta, the black smith, creates and repairs tools, weapons, and other metal objects. Greta keeps her most valuable tools and works on her most important projects in solitude in a secret underground workshop below the shop.

**3 - Harvest Festival Grounds.** The Harvest Festival is a time of great celebration in Ashcroft, where the villagers come together to share the bounty of the year's harvest. A massive bonfire is lit at the center of the village, where the villagers dance and feast until the early hours of the morning.

**4 - The Healer's Hut.** The Healer's Hut is the home and workplace of Marcus, the village healer. An herb garden surrounds the hut, filled with all manner of medicinal plants and herbs.

**5 - The Old Ash.** The Old Ash is a massive, centuries-old tree located just outside the village. Villagers leave offerings to the local nature spirits at the tree's base, in the hopes of receiving blessings and good luck.

**6 - The Weaver's Workshop.** The Weaver's Workshop is Thalia's home and workshop, where she creates and sells her beautiful tapestries and other woven goods. Thalia keeps a quiet meditation space in the attic, which she uses to escape from the chaos of daily life.

## Current Calamities

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Here are a few adventure hooks to keep the characters busy while they are in Ashcroft.

**Bandit Raids.** A group of ruthless bandits has been raiding villages in the area, and Ashcroft is their next target. The bandits have been stealing food, valuables, and livestock, and have even taken villagers captive for ransom. The attacks have left the villagers afraid and vulnerable, with many of them struggling to provide for their families in the face of the bandit threat. The characters can help by fortifying the village defenses, tracking down the bandit hideout, or even negotiating with the bandits to try and find a peaceful solution.

**Cattle Rustling.** A group of rustlers has been stealing the village's cattle, causing a shortage of meat and dairy products, and threatening the livelihood of the farmers. The rustlers are difficult to catch and have been operating under cover of darkness. The characters can help by setting up traps, conducting night watches, or even working with the local authorities to bring the rustlers to justice.

**Plague.** A mysterious illness has spread through the village, killing many of the villagers and causing widespread panic. The plague has left many of the villagers isolated and fearful, with some even turning to dark magic in an attempt to stave off the disease. The characters can help by seeking out a cure, investigating the source of the plague, or even trying to contain its spread through quarantine and isolation measures.

**Goblins in the Woods.** A tribe of goblins has taken up residence in the nearby woods, attacking travelers and raiding nearby villages, and the villagers of Ashcroft fear they may be next. The goblins are cunning

and dangerous, and have even begun kidnapping villagers for use in their twisted experiments. The characters can help by driving the goblins out of the area, negotiating a truce, or even making an alliance with a more peaceful goblin tribe.

**Harsh Winter.** The harsh winter weather has made it difficult for the villagers to gather food and supplies, and many of them are struggling to survive in the cold and snow. The villagers are running low on firewood and other essential resources, and are beginning to fear for their lives. The characters can help by gathering firewood, hunting for food, or even seeking out magical or divine aid to help them weather the cold.

**Sabotage.** Someone in the village has been sabotaging the farmers' crops and tools, causing widespread damage and slowing down the village's recovery from the drought. The villagers are suspicious of each other, and are beginning to turn on one another in their search for the culprit. The characters can help by investigating the sabotage, finding the culprit, and putting an end to their nefarious plans before it's too late.

**Crop Failure.** Due to a prolonged drought, the crops in and around Ashcroft have failed, leaving the villagers without enough food to last through the winter. The villagers are struggling to survive, and tensions are beginning to rise as resources dwindle. The characters can help by organizing a trade caravan to bring in supplies from other villages, seeking out a source of magical or divine aid to help bring rain to the parched land, or even uncovering the root cause of the drought and finding a way to reverse it.

## Random Encounters

Need to shake things up a little? Choose or roll d12 to generate a random encounter.

d12	Encounter
1	A belligerent drunk at the Watering Hole Inn challenges the characters to a drinking contest.
2	A farmer asks the characters to help him recover a stolen cow from a nearby field.
3	A group of children challenge the characters to a game of tag.
4	A group of local artisans ask the characters to help them source rare materials for their crafts.
5	A crazed mage arrives in the village and begins causing chaos with his unpredictable spells.
6	A group of villagers ask the characters to help them track down a band of poachers who have been stealing game from the local forests.
7	The village elder asks the characters to help him investigate a mysterious and ancient artifact that has been uncovered in the nearby ruins.
8	A group of bards pass through Ashcroft, and one of them offers to teach the characters a new song or dance.
9	A young woman asks the characters to help her find her missing fiancé, who disappeared while on a hunting trip.
10	A group of travelers arrive in Ashcroft, claiming to be on a pilgrimage to a nearby holy site, but some villagers suspect that they are actually cultists in disguise.
11	A wealthy merchant offers to pay the characters to escort him and his valuable goods to a nearby city, but they soon realize that the merchant is not who he seems.
12	A group of hunters arrive in Ashcroft, offering to sell the characters exotic meats and pelts from their latest expedition.