

Shards and gaps

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 09 Jul 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/946>

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Peter Westlake — 09 Jul 1998, 22:49

At 20:41 1998/07/09 GMT, mantis wrote:

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Likewise we know little about Nessus. Who is the ruler of this sprawling city? I'll bet that few have figured out that it is an archon, and that he probably allows each quarter to be run by local people. But where is the archon's palace, how many are in his court? And what was the Wall built for?

And why is the area near the wall kept clear? Someone suggests it is to allow the city to expand, but Baldanders says it isn't for that. Later we learnt that the city was razed, so maybe the gaps were bomb sites, cleared by war, but that doesn't explain why they are not rebuilt.

I still want to know what Agilus' ribbon was for. One of the more mystifying shards.

SBear.

Matthew Malthouse — 10 Jul 1998, 00:58 · follows Peter Westlake

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Sev tells (is told?) that the Last Inn is in a tree because building so close is [actively] prohibited. I've interpolated 'actively' there because such land would be highly prized by wealthy city dwellers, even if population pressures had eased from what they were, and would not have gone undeveloped had some authority not taken continual measures to keep it clear.

Right now I'm not certain that I can justify one word of what follows but my impression was the the wall was built to contain the city and it's hinterland, farms etc. Like the wall enclosing Minas Tirith's nearer farmlands in The Lord of The Rings.

Ancient Nessus lay to the south of the Citadel and over the milenium spread north (cf Sevs journey through the deserted southern quarters) engulfing the citadel until the citadel itself was

in the "south" of the populous areas.

If the wall pre-existed this expansion of the urban areas then it would form a barrier to continuing sprawl upstream.

In Severian's time it is inhabited (cf the cacogens at the gate) and it would make sense that any Autarch would wish to keep a clear space around such an installation. The killing ground is a basic of defensive architecture.

But why was the wall built? Does it protect the city and its hinterland or contain them? There is at least the implication that it contains the city and its populous, but ref the Ascians having come as far as the wall then its defensive as well. As a simple wall it is overly large as a ground barrier and yet vulnerable to sophisticated technologies, especially if airborne.

Now this is unadulterated speculation on my part but is the wall in overall plan circular? Might it have been the base for some sort of dome (forcefield rather than physical) either for protection from a deteriorating environment or maybe even a defense against space attack? Just as a last related question: apart from the changing focus of the civilian city is there any indication that the Citadel - spaceport - might be in the geometrical centre of the area enclosed by the wall?

Matthew