

THE LOST CATACOMBS OF AULDBAERN

ABOUT

The Catacombs of Auldbaern are an ancient dwarven burial site in the Black Loch. While many dwarves are interred within, the most notable tomb is that of King Aron II.

Auldbaern is the old, dwarven name for the city that is now Vlyn'darastyl. It was founded and ruled by dwarves until 1200 years ago, when an army of drow conquered it, driving the dwarves out.

The city's last dwarven king, Aron II, was killed during the defense of the city. His remains were brought to the catacombs by a member of his royal guard and interred in the tomb that had been constructed for him years before. After placing the king in his elaborate sarcophagus and saying what few prayers he could remember, the soldier dragged several heavy slabs of rock over the entrance to the catacombs to conceal their location for good.

To this day, that royal guardsman remains the last person to enter the catacombs. While age and geological movement have caused some crumbling and decay, the place is still largely as it was when it was sealed.

NOTES

The catacombs are located on Cairnhollow Isle, quite a long way from the city of Auldbaern, which stood where Vlyn'darastyl is today. For reasons that remain unclear, the local dwarves considered the island their traditional burial ground and brought all their dead here for interment. Cairnhollow Isle itself was named for the many dwarven crypts built upon it.

While most of Cairnhollow's other burial sites have been plundered or collapsed, the catacombs remain intact and untouched. Some valuables might be found among the tombs and funeral offerings scattered throughout the tunnels, such as coins, jewelry or statuettes. But most of the wealth in the catacombs would be found in the royal tomb of King Aron II.

Throughout the catacombs, there are small recesses in the walls. These are niches, containing the skeletal remains of the dead. Most of the dwarves buried here were interred in such niches, with the exception of a few of the wealthier occupants, who were entombed in stone coffins.

Some of the smaller chambers are clan tombs, containing the remains of several generations of a family. These tombs usually have the clan's sigil inscribed on the floor.

Most of the objects around the catacombs are funerary urns, candles and offerings to the dead. These offerings may be engraved stones, figurines or other mementos. Some are of value, while most are not.

The party might learn the location of this place as a reward for another adventure. Perhaps a former sailor who has traveled to Cairnhollow Isle on several occasions needs the party's help. The sailor, who has no money, promises the location of the ancient catacombs as payment.

The catacombs might be occupied by spiders or burrowing creatures that have made their way inside. The tunnels may also be plagued with undead, perhaps including the king's vengeful revenant.

Rummaging through the bones of the deceased and looting their valuables isn't grave-robbing as long as you say the magic word: "archaeology."





