

Baron Aldred

(Nigel Ward)

Of middling height and build, his dark curly hair speckled with grey and sporting a short salt and pepper beard, Aldred, Baron of Gorburn, could pass for a moderately prosperous merchant or townsman in his late forties. Aldred's only distinguishing features are piercing blue eyes which glint from beneath bushy black brows and a surprisingly booming voice suited to battlefield command. He dresses predominantly in somber blacks, greys and browns. His clothes are well made but lack the ostentatious style more common amongst Southern nobles.



Although he was trained in the arts of war by his father Almaric, a renowned warrior, Aldred knows he is no more than a sound swordsman. Rather, his skills lie in statecraft – his intellect is his greatest weapon. He considers himself a good judge of character, which made Beorn's betrayal all the more frustrating.

Whilst he expects the deference due his title, Aldred is unpretentious and less taciturn company with his trusted advisers. When dealing with southern lords and the King, he plays the part of the dour, rustic border-lord, but in reality, he is a clever and curious man open to new ideas. Aldred is pious enough for a lord but knows that the old gods and faerie powers still hold sway in the wild and lonely places. Although Gorburn's people are simple, unsophisticated folk, the influence of the freemen of Clyster is beginning to bring more civilised tastes into the wild North.

Gorburn is a large holding but less densely populated than most southern fiefs and the harsh weather can play havoc with harvests. Aldred's lands are thus not particularly fruitful and this together with his fair and honest levying of taxes results in an emptier treasury than southern spies suspect!

Aldred was blessed with two children, a son and heir, Almaric, and a daughter, Alais. His wife, a distant cousin of the old King from near Netherford, died in childbirth. Aldred has not remarried but found comfort in recent years with the widowed Lady Sarah of Norham. Aldred is genuinely fond of his children and his wife's death meant he tended to indulge them more than was proper for noble children. Almaric's recent death by misadventure drove Aldred to the brink of despair. Only the careful ministrations of Father Theobald, Sarah, and Alais brought him forth from deep melancholy.

Almaric's death has thrown Gorburn's succession into question. Whilst there is certainly precedent for 17 year old Alais to eventually become Baroness in her own right, this technically requires the King's writ. Aldred's enemies have already begun lobbying against such an eventuality and are seeking suitable suitors for Alais. Aldred ponders a marital alliance with Duke Carnasse, having broached the subject with him in Beltayne one winter.

Ill content with learning to be a proper lady, Alais has been clandestinely studying sorcery with Aldred's court magician, and has proven a quick and able study, blessed with her father's sharp intellect. Aldred is aware of this but feigns ignorance, secretly pleased Alais will have staunch friends and the power to protect herself and Gorburn in the troubled times ahead.

Beset by Thulish raids, the covetous machinations of Grisaille and Montombre, rumblings on the Cornumbrian border, and treasonous plots from within, Aldred and his people face dark days ahead. The actions of a few brave heroes could tip the precarious balance. Only time will tell whether, in the words of Gerard Grisaille, "the Old Wolf and his whelp" can keep the vicious hounds at bay or will fall to one of the many enemies intent on Aldred's demise.

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| BARON ALDRED | | Rank 3 Knight | |
| ATTACK | 16 | Sword +1 (d8 +1, 5) | |
| DEFENCE | 11 | Gambeson (AF 1) or Plate (AF 5) & Shield | |
| MAGICAL ATTACK | N/A | Magic Points | None |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 6 (8) | Health Points | 12 |
| EVASION | 5 | Movement | 10m (20m) |
| STEALTH | 13 | PERCEPTION | 5 (Panoptical) |
| Strength 12 Reflexes 13 Intelligence 16 Psychic Talent 11 Looks 12 | | | |

Special Abilities: Armour Expert, Ride Warhorse, Track, Iron Will (+2 to MAGICAL DEFENCE). Armour: A fine, quilted gambeson at court (AF 1). In battle, fine plate mail and shield (AF 5). Treasures: Aldred wears a gold chain of office crafted for him by his wizard and the monks of Osterlin. It operates as a permanent *Mindcloak* spell. Aldred wields his father's sword; it is a +1 blade.

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