

Questionnaire Results

Exactly 250 Questionnaires were returned; i.e., about a quarter of the membership — not a bad response! The results are set out here, with the percentage out of 250 given in parentheses:-

A. CONTENT

1. Should there be a difference in content between *Mallorn* and *Amon Hen*? YES: 229 (91.6%) NO: 7 (2.8%)
2. Do you think *Mallorn* is fine as it is? YES: 114 (45.6%) NO: 90 (36%)
3. Of *Mellyrn* 13-15, which did you like most? M 13: 30 (12%) M 14: 20 (8%) M 15: 55 (22%)
which did you like least? M 13: 23 (9.2%) M 14: 42 (16.8%) M 15: 23 (9.2%)
4. Should *Mallorn* be concerned only with Tolkien? YES: 113 (45.2%) NO: 121 (48.4%)
5. Should *Mallorn* contain material on Tolkien-related literature? YES: 212 (84.8%) NO: 19 (7.6%)
6. Should *Mallorn* contain material on fantasy literature in general? YES: 115 (46%) NO: 131 (52.4%)
7. How much space should *Mallorn* devote to other authors besides Tolkien?
about half of each issue: 6 (2.4%) at least one article per issue: 82 (32.8%)
about a quarter of each issue: 11 (4.4%) only occasional articles: 124 (49.6%)
8. Which other authors would you like to see featured in *Mallorn*?
C.S. Lewis: 68 (27.2%) Others (various): 56 (22.4%) S. Donaldson: 29 (11.6%) Chas. Williams: 24 (9.6%)
Ursula Le Guin: 22 (8.8%) Alan Garner: 13 (5.2%) Others (SF): 12 (4.8%) JRRR's sources: 8 (3.2%)
Michael Moorcock: 6 (2.4%) Others (fantasy): 5 (2%)
9. Should the articles in *Mallorn* be more 'academic'/'serious' than the articles in *Amon Hen*?
YES: 168 (67.2%) NO: 53 (21.2%)
10. Which of the following would you like to see more of in *Mallorn*?
literary criticism: 141 (56.4%) philology/linguistics: 115 (46%) reviews: 109 (43.6%)
biographical material: 115 (46%) comparisons with other lit.: 91 (36.4%) Articles by 'big names': 143 (57.2%)
- 11 a. Should *Mallorn* contain articles that assume Middle-earth to be a 'real' world?
YES: 183 (73.2%) NO: 41 (16.4%)
- 11 b. If so, how much space should *Mallorn* devote to such articles?
about half of each issue: 33 (13.2%) only one article per issue: 55 (22%)
about a quarter of each issue: 69 (27.6%) only occasional articles: 30 (12%)
12. Are you satisfied with *Mallorn*'s present blend of articles and 'creative' material (poetry, art, fiction)?
YES: 174 (69.6%) NO: 50 (20%)
13. Should occasional issues of *Mallorn* only contain 'creative' material? YES: 71 (28.4%) NO: 159 (63.6%)
14. How much of each kind of material should there be in *Mallorn*?

	OK	MORE	LESS	NONE
Poetry	167 (66.8%)	32 (12.8%)	28 (11.2%)	5 (2%)
Artwork	139 (55.6%)	82 (32.8%)	7 (2.8%)	2 (0.8%)
Fiction	87 (34.8%)	93 (37.2%)	27 (10.8%)	32 (12.8%)
Puzzles/Crosswords	53 (21.2%)	58 (23.2%)	41 (16.4%)	67 (26.8%)
General Articles	107 (42.8%)	108 (43.2%)	10 (4%)	—

15. [See below.]

B. LAYOUT

16. Do you like the proposed revision of the cover of *Mallorn*? YES: 194 (77.6%) NO: 42 (16.8%)
17. Do you like the new layout in columns? YES: 106 (42.4%) NO: 127 (50.8%)
18. Do you think the smaller print size would be easy enough to read? YES: 100 (40%) NO: 121 (48.4%)
19. Which typestyle do you prefer? Typestyle A: 197 (78.8%) Typestyle B: 38 (15.2%)
(as used here) (smaller style)
20. Do you like the illustrated headings in *Mallorn*? YES: 225 (90%) NO: 6 (2.4%)
21. Do you like the 'illuminated' initial letters in *Mallorn*? YES: 223 (89.2%) NO: 9 (3.6%)
22. [See below.]

First, some interesting but useless information. Of the 250 returned questionnaires, 39 were from outside the U.K.: the Netherlands beat its nearest rival, the USA, by one with 8 replies; third was Sweden with 5 closely followed by New Zealand with 4; strung out in ones and twos in the rear were Belgium,

Canada, Eire, France, Germany, Norway, Australia, Brazil and Finland. A special word of thanks is due, though, to all of these folk who were public spirited enough to send airmail letters from abroad.

Many of the replies, however, were from new members brought into the fold by the radio serial

here in the U.K. 35 actually said that they were new, but a quick glance at the number of responses to Question 3 (an average of only 32) shows, I think, that many more were unable to answer that question because M16 was their first *Mallorm*. It could even be that the majority of those who replied were new members. Certainly we were overwhelmed by the response, on past form not having expected more than about 100! But maybe I am maligning our old-stagers — in any case, our thanks to all, both new and old, for such a magnificent response.

The Questionnaire was designed to check on five things in connection with the content of *Mallorm*: (1), whether there should be a clear difference between the type of content of *Mallorm* and that of *Amon Hen* [Q1]; arising from this, (2) whether members wanted *Mallorm* to be less exclusively Tolkien-dominated than *AH* [Q4-8]; (3) whether *M* should aim at being a 'serious' or even 'academically respectable' journal [Q9-10] — and therefore (4), whether *M* should continue to publish articles that maintain the fiction that Middle-earth & the events therein are 'real' or 'true' [Q11]. Finally (5), we wanted to be sure that members were happy with the balance between the various kinds of material in *Mallorm* [Q12-14].

The answer to point (1) that emerges from the questionnaires seems to be that there *should* be a difference between the two Society publications (92%), and the only clear response as to *what* this difference ought to be is found in Q9: 67% of respondents felt that *Mallorm* must in some sense be more 'academic' or 'serious' than *AH*. On point (2) the answer was ambivalent: there was a 50/50 split as to whether *Mallorm* should deal exclusively with Tolkien; and although 85% felt that Tolkien-related material should be included, this turned out to be a desire for only occasional articles on other authors, at most one per issue (Q7). (Typical comments in this regard were: "I am only concerned with Tolkien, not anybody else"; "[*M* should include only] that which can be shown to have influenced JRRT, or been strongly influenced by him"; and "I think that [in *M*] the TS's devotion to Tolkien should be CENTRAL & OBVIOUS, but not EXCLUSIVE.")

Point (4), however, was the one that really provoked some sharp response! Graffiti decorating Q11a included, "Stupid question / It is, isn't it? / Why not?"; and the overall vote was a resounding 'Yes'. (Though on the other side there were those who felt that "articles taking Middle-earth's 'reality' literally" were inappropriate in *Mallorm*.) However 40% wanted a quarter or more of each issue devoted to such articles. (A characteristic of questionnaire results is that complete contradictions often arise: and this occurred in the comments on Q11, with the article "Isengard & Saruman" in M15 being selected by one respondent as a prime example of what we *don't* want in *Mallorm*, and by another as exactly the sort of thing we *do* want! You can't please all the people all the time...)

We have to conclude, therefore, that 'academic respectability' is not the kind of 'seriousness' that members feel should set *Mallorm* apart from *Amon Hen*. A 'respectable' academic journal would never (except very occasionally, with tongue in cheek) play at being part of the sub-creation of the author it was devoted to. (And this was what was meant by "assuming Middle-earth to be a 'real' world": some respondents wrongly concluded that we were ruling out even the legitimate assumption of 'reality' for the purposes of literary criticism, etc., which was not our intention; but limitations of space prevented a full explanation.)

What kind of 'seriousness' *do* people want, then? Wayne Hammond (USA) comments, "It's better to be *scholarly* than academic. Being a scholar doesn't necessarily mean being an expert in a field. ...[It is] a state of mind in which ... accuracy of facts and clarity of ideas and presentation are uppermost. (A scholarly work...isn't necessarily dry as dust.)..." He compares *Mallorm* favourably with *Mythlore* in this re-

spect; but reassures us on our status with the information that he "first saw a copy of *Mallorm* in 1975, in the... graduate library at the University of Michigan!" So there's hope for us yet! Margaret Askew, herself a journalist, agrees with this verdict: articles should be scholarly, but readable and enjoyable. Others want a completely academic approach: "As a JOURNAL it should have JOURNAL STATUS"; "[*M*] could become a recognized source for scholarship". But many more are obviously worried about just such a development: one respondent fears that he would no longer be able to read *Mallorm* during his lunch-breaks if it became too academic...; another cries in anguish, "No, no, no! *AH* is heavy enough at times!" And a new member pleads, "Please, please, do not put off... non-academic members... by placing too much emphasis on scholastics." Others are concerned that contributions should be by TS members, not imported 'experts'; and we must therefore accept what we get. Quite a few also reacted against the lack of humour implied by the word 'serious' (and characteristic of *Mallorm* so far): "[*M*] should be... a little more light-hearted at times"; "How about a laugh once in a while?"

Where does this all leave us as regards points (1) & (3)? At a recent editorial conference we decided on the policy outlined in the 'Guidelines for Contributors' on p.2: any type of article, humorous or serious, treating Middle-earth as 'real' or not, will be considered: but the criterion (for *Mallorm*, as opposed to *AH*) will be that it should add something *new* to our understanding or enjoyment of JRRT and his works: i.e., there must be some degree of analysis or originality — articles merely describing or summarizing what is already available elsewhere will not be acceptable. But this is the only limitation on content that we feel we should impose (apart from 'readability', etc.).

Many, however, made adverse comments about the length of some articles in recent issues: and in response to this we have adopted a general limit of 5,000 words for any one article (though this may be waived in particular exceptional cases). But an obvious difference between *M* & *AH* that many pointed out is that *M* can afford longer articles & greater detail.

As for point (5) on content — the balance between the various types of material — it was encouraging to see that we appear to have got it just about right. Almost 70% said 'Yes' to Q12. And the overwhelming verdict in Q14 was for the same or more of everything (some just circled the entire 'More' column!) — with the notable exception of puzzles/cross-words, where the vote was about evenly split between less-or-none and the-same-or-more. For fiction, too, there was a significantly higher percentage against than in the case of poetry, artwork and articles.

Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the art, poetry & fiction so far published in *Mallorm*: "the artwork is sometimes brilliant, sometimes poor"; "I find much of the 'poetry' rather embarrassing, and too long"; "[many of the short stories are] written in an un-Tolkien-like style which does not... correspond with the setting or the characters"; and so on. Well, there's an obvious retort to that! We are dependent upon what we get. But two measures that people suggested can be taken: first, the editor can (& will) 'commission' art, short stories & articles from established 'practitioners'; and second, where there is doubt about the quality of a contribution it will be submitted to an 'expert' for his/her opinion. In this way we hope to maintain quality without discouraging non-'expert' contributors.

More than one person suggested art/poetry/short story competitions as a means of improving quality, and one respondent tied this in with the idea raised in Q13: the results of such competition(s) to be published in a special issue of *Mallorm*. But most preferred our present 'blend'.

[Continued on p.20]

Old am I, and lonely now,
 And to the stars reflected bow:
 My fate is told: alone must I
 Watch the slow stars wheeling by,
 Ever in my pool to stay
 Solitary from this day.
 I sadly dream of years long past
 When once my lover held me fast:
 Yes, I was fair, but now am old,
 And now at last my tale is told.

Two daughters had I, sweet and rare,
 Of face so fine and form so fair,
 Fathered by the restless wynd:
 But now they are no longer mine.

Sara Pickering

[QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS. continued from p.6.]

On content in general, a number of people commented that *quality* should take precedence over *quantity*; and several summed up the editor's dilemma with questions like, "Do you really have so much good material to consider these options [in Q 14]?" And those who made comments like, "*Mallorn* does not really seem to have an identity of its own ... the articles in each *Mallorn* seem haphazard" and "It seems very unclear what *Mallorn* is for...", should bear in mind that *Mallorn* can only be what its contributors make it: so if in doubt, contribute! This Questionnaire is a serious effort to help establish an identity for the journal; but it will only succeed if there is a large enough inflow of material to make careful selection possible. *This means YOU!!*

Those who suggested having a 'theme' for each issue were obviously getting at the same problem of 'haphazardness': this is a very attractive suggestion, but again, it depends on having a large enough supply of material of all kinds to choose from.

On *layout*, most people liked the cover revision (slightly adapted in this issue); not a few suggested varying the covers every time, like *AH* (we've dug our heels in there!); and a couple complained of having the covers mangled in the post (this we've tried to alleviate by using a heavier quality paper without lamination). Judgment on the columns was of course invalidated by our mistake of double-reducing the sample; this issue gives you the true picture. On the illustrated headings and initial letters there was virtual unanimity in favour. Some felt there was too much blank space around, some felt there was too little; and one or two wanted some variety in type-styles in the headings; but the overall reaction was favourable, and we blush with pleasure at such comments as, "...the best laid-out magazine I've come across recently..." and, "*Mallorn* is practically a

work of art." Thank you! We does our best...

There has not been space to do justice to the very many interesting suggestions for content and layout that were made. All will be carefully considered! But here are just a few, to give ideas to all you new contributors out there: small illustrations dotted about the text, like *AH* (done! but more needed...); articles on: modern music & JRRT; religion in Middle-earth; wargaming; films influenced by JRRT; "mythology & mythopoeia from other languages & cultures"; unpublished JRRT fragments/writings not available elsewhere (can but try!); 'Middle-earth geology & political economy' [quote from T.S. publicity leaflet thrown back at us!]; a Tolkien Bibliography; an index every (say) 5 issues (being done!); 'Notes on Contributors' (see Editorial!); reprints of good articles that have appeared elsewhere (let us know about them!); more earwigs (??). Most people liked the centre-spread and last-page poetry tradition that we've established: so let's have more suitable poems, too! And a high vote was given to literary criticism in Q 10 and in your comments: so with the 'most-popular-authors' list of Q 8 as a guide, let's have some more articles like the one by Pilar San Jose and Gregory Starkey in this issue. Finally, John Trippick suggests establishing a pool of talent for *Mallorn*, which I think is an excellent idea. If you have a talent in any direction (art, calligraphy, fiction, poetry), or an area of expertise (history, geology, literature, etc.), and you would be prepared to be of service, please write in to us (with a sample of your work where appropriate). This would be of great value both in 'commissioning' high-quality contributions, and in drawing up a list of 'experts' to whom material can be referred.

Many thanks, once again, to those 250 who made this Questionnaire such a worthwhile exercise. Now, as a couple of people said, it's up to *AH* to follow suit!

Steve Pillinger