

## Londoner 59

### Chapter 59. Cinran Market

The guard captain explained, "In case of a bandit raid, it would make it much easier for us to respond if we had wide, straight roads in the village. In that case we could even ride on horses to that location, in order to quickly overwhelm the bandits with numbers in each place they are attacking, since they would be spread-out throughout the village for plundering."

"That is true as well," Kivamus said with a nod. "Let's also keep a standard width for all the new roads. I think a width of ten meters - which is around eleven yards, would be more than enough for us." While it was true that roads on earth were much wider to accommodate automobiles, in this world ten meters would be more than enough for them for the coming years.

He continued, "That space would allow us to make a drainage system on both sides of the road - that is a narrow trench, maybe around one foot wide and may be a little deeper than that. This way, even in case of heavy rainfall, all the excess water would go to those drains - which would run all around the village and eventually end in a pond dug specifically for that. We can make that pond in the southern area of the village, to use for irrigating the farms."

"That would be a very good idea, my Lord," Gorsazo said. "Usually only the bigger cities like Ulriga or Dorastiz have such a drain within the city. And it would reduce the chances of flooding which can damage any stored grains, or even the houses themselves. Of course, we would have to give the longhouses some height for that."

Kivamus nodded. "Certainly, the foundation of the houses should be a little higher than the roads themselves."

Duvas said, "We have more than enough stone rubble from the coal mines sitting in big piles near those hills. We can't bring that rubble here until the wagons are back from Cinran, but after that, we can easily use those in the foundation for the longhouses and any new barns."

"That's doable as well," Kivamus replied. "We can't do the same for the rest of the houses in the village yet, but after the longhouses have been built and people have shifted all their belongings there, we can tear down the damaged houses and make new housing in place of that, while making properly planned roads with drainage in those places as well. Of course, that is for the future - maybe after the winter."

"We can also use some of that gravel as the surface of the new roads, which will allow for better drainage of them." He continued, "There should also be such a road going south to where the farms start, so that any carts, wagons and log-movers can travel easily on them."

He added, "Apart from the roads around the longhouses, let's also make a road for the periphery of the village, just inside the new village walls. In case there is a breach of the walls, we need the guards to be able to reach any place near the walls easily on horses and still have enough space near the walls to be able to repel any attackers there by using superior numbers."

Hudan smirked. "Once we have such wide roads in the village, then with well-trained guards and enough fast horses for them, the bandits wouldn't know what hit them if they dare to raid us after that!"

Kivamus couldn't help but grin at that notion. "Indeed. But that reminds me, even after all the guards have returned from Cinran, will we have enough guards to defend the whole village?"

Hudan shrugged. "If you ask for my opinion, my Lord, I would always like to have more guards. But whether we can afford to properly outfit that many men and basically have them sitting idle when they are not fighting is a different matter altogether."

Kivamus commented, "They do not necessarily have to sit idle, you know?"

"What do you mean?" Duvas asked.

Kivamus steepled his hands. "It is always a good idea to train more men than you think you'll need, but we don't have to keep all of them on guard duty full time. We can just keep a core of two dozen well trained guards - the men we have already hired, who will be on guard duty all the time."

Kivamus continued, "But we can have another dozen guards, who have been well trained by Hudan, but they won't normally have to do guard duty in the village. And in case there is a bandit raid, since we will now have proper village walls around us, that means the full-time guards can hold on any attackers there, while one of them goes to the village to call upon the other uh... reserve guards. Then we can quickly outfit those reserve guards, and send them wherever they are needed."

He added, "This way we can call upon up to three dozen guards when needed, but in peaceful times, only two dozen men will be out of the village workforce, and the rest can do whatever work they need to do. And as an incentive to villagers to become reserve guards, we can pay them say... a quarter of the wages of a guard. That should still be affordable to us, and by doing this, we will be able to quickly increase our guard force in case of a bandit raid."

It didn't take long for Hudan to think of the implications. "That is an excellent idea, my Lord!" he said excitedly. "Earlier, I had thought about further increasing the number of guards, but I knew we couldn't afford to pay that many men."

He nodded to himself. "I will start doing this from today itself. Since many of the workers are still sitting idle because of a shortage of tools, I will select a few of them who are trusted men, after verifying with Mr Duvas, and will start giving them some basic training. In fact, since I am already telling the basics of fighting to those men who are good with using machetes, I can just select the trusted men among them as our reserve guards. Once they find out that they will get some extra money just for getting trained, and knowing that they would rarely be called to actually fight, there shouldn't be any shortage of volunteers for this."

"Good idea. You should do that," Kivamus said. "Of course, that money will also be in the form of some extra grain for now."

Thinking for a minute, he added, "Since we have decided to leave a hundred yards of empty space all around the village, we can build the new barns in the south of the village itself, instead of in the west as we planned earlier. These barns can be located on the inner side of the periphery roads, which would allow easy access to the barns when we are bringing in the new harvest next year on the wagons and carts."

Gorsazo said, "But this would mean that the new barns would be quite close to the walls. And in case the walls are breached in a bandit raid, they can easily steal grain from there, and when running away, the bandits could put the barns on fire, so the guards would become busy putting out that fire instead of chasing them. We have already seen them doing that in the previous raid."

Kivamus sighed. There were no easy solutions in this world. "That is true enough. But there is still some time before we start to make new barns, since we have to build all the longhouses as well as the village walls first. So constructing the barns might not start till spring anyway. We'll see what else we can do about this at that time."

He stood up from his armchair. "Alright then. Duvas and Hudan, both of you go and measure a distance of around hundred yards in the north and the south and tell the workers to start digging the holes for the walls. Hudan, you also need to give some training to those with machetes in the evening, so start picking those amongst them who are trusted people and are interested in becoming reserve guards. You can leave now."

~ Tesyb ~

~ Market square, Cinran ~

As Tesyb waited for Pydas to complete his deal with another grain merchant in the afternoon, he took a moment to look around the place. The town of Cinran stretched out around him, a sprawling mass of haphazardly arranged buildings - the huge market square on one side, and the residential area on the other. Hearing stories about this town from his childhood, he had been excited to visit this place, and it didn't disappoint.

The market square was a bustling hub of activity. The air was thick with the scent of roasting meat and fresh bread, a tantalizing contrast to the paltry meals they were accustomed to. Stalls overflowed with a variety of well crafted tools, fabrics, and heaps of vegetables and fruits. The blacksmith's forge glowed nearby with an orange heat, the rhythmic clang of metal on metal echoing through the square. As he had passed a nearby alley earlier, the acrid smell of animal hides had announced the presence of a tanner's shop there. There were shops selling pottery, clothing, and hand-carved wooden toys, along with many butcher shops. Several bakeries lined the street as well, their windows filled with tempting displays of bread, cheese and pastries sweetened with honey, even though he couldn't afford any of it. A group of traveling minstrels entertained the crowd with their lively tunes near the center, drawing a cluster of onlookers.

The market square was paved with cobblestones with a stone sculpture built in the middle of the square. However, the rest of the town, at least the parts he had seen so far, didn't have any cobblestone streets. Instead, he had found himself navigating a maze of dirt paths, churned into mud by the constant traffic of horses, nodors and carts, while dodging goats and chickens who seemed to have free reign of the town. All the buildings around him were made of wood as well. Although he had heard from someone that the Count of Cinran himself lived in a stone mansion, unlike the wooden baron's manor in Tiranat. Of course, he was the Count of this whole region, unlike the baron who only governed a small coal mining village. But despite its shortcomings, the town of Cinran was a stark contrast to their small village. There was a sense of energy and vitality here that was absent from the quiet existence of Tiranat.

Earlier in the day, after they had left the inn with their cargo of coal, Feroy had told them that he was taking the damaged wagon himself to the wainwright for repairs, and he would find them in the market square in the afternoon, after he had completed a few other things that he wanted to do. However, Tesyb had no idea what those things were. After that, Pydas had led them to a local coal merchant who readily agreed to buy all their coal. They had spent all the morning transferring coal from their own wagons to the huge storehouse of that merchant with the help of his workers.

That had only been completed around an hour ago, and then Pydas had told them to park three of their empty wagons in a side alley with little traffic, with half the guards staying there with the empty wagons. He had only taken the remaining three wagons with him, including the other three guards to a grain merchant he knew, after telling them that he didn't want any onlookers to know that he would be leaving with such a big grain caravan later. The plan was to buy enough grain for the three wagons in one trip, and then to park these wagons in that alley later, and return with the other three wagons to buy the remaining grain with another merchant, along with the other things like salt, iron nails and iron ingots.

Soon, Pydas let him know that it was done, and the guards started to load up the wagons with all the bought sacks of grain. With that done, they carried out their agreed upon plan, and this time it was Tesyb's turn to stay in the alley with the loaded wagons, while three other guards went with Pydas again to get the remaining grain. It was getting late in the afternoon now, and until now Tesyb hadn't gotten any opportunity to go and meet his sister.

He told another guard staying there that he would be back within half an hour. The guard was reluctant to let him leave, but Feroy had told them that a robbery was not likely in the town, particularly in daylight, so Tesyb was still allowed to go as long as he didn't take too long.

Giving a nod to him, Tesyb returned towards the market square, since his sister had told him when she had last visited Tiranat, that she worked in a seamstress' shop in an alley close to the market square itself. It took a while as he wandered through the market looking for it, but soon he saw a sign above a shop's door indicating that it was a tailor's workshop. Entering inside, he asked the shop owner, "Does a girl by the name of Isuha work here?"