

# Grand Fenwick

The **Duchy of Grand Fenwick** is a tiny fictional country created by **Leonard Wibberley** in a series of comedic novels beginning with *The Mouse That Roared* (1955), which was later made into a film.

In the novels, Wibberley goes beyond the merely comic, placing the tiny nation (15 square miles/39 square kilometres) in absurd situations so as to comment satirically on contemporary politics and events.

## 1 History and topography

The Duchy of Grand Fenwick is no more than five miles (8 km) long and three miles (5 km) wide and lies in a fold in the **Northern Alps**. It features three valleys, a river, and a mountain with an elevation of 2,000 feet (610 m). On the northern slopes are 400 acres (160 ha) of vineyards. The hillsides where the ground is less fertile support flocks of sheep that provide meat, dairy products, and wool. Most of the inhabitants live in the City of Fenwick, which is clustered around Fenwick Castle, the seat of government. The city of Fenwick is also home to the only bar/inn/restaurant in the country, the Gray Goose Pub. About 2 miles (3 km) from the City of Fenwick is a 500 acres (200 ha) Forest Preserve that features a 20-foot (6.1 m) waterfall and attracts many birds that the nation claims as its own native birds.<sup>[1]</sup>

The Duchy takes its name from its founder, the **English knight** Sir Roger Fenwick who, while employed by France, settled there with his followers in 1370. Thanks to Sir Roger, the national language is **English**. Likewise Sir Roger is literally the “father of His Country”, being a common ancestor of Duchess Gloriana XII, Prime Minister Count Mountjoy, and High Constable Tully Bascomb.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Duchy, ruled by Duchess Gloriana XII, is described as bordering **Switzerland** and **France** in the **Alps**. Internal evidence points to the Duchy being in the Franche-Comte region in eastern France, near (or on top off) Les Gras.<sup>[3]</sup> It retains a **pre-industrial** economy, based almost entirely on making wool and **Pinot** Grand Fenwick wine. However, in the fourth book of the Mouse series, there are two cars in Grand Fenwick, one belonging to the Duchess Gloriana, and the other belonging to the Count of Mountjoy. There is only one **petrol station**, which is also the bicycle shop. The Duchy has a postal service, although mail going outside the Duchy has to be sent to **Monaco**.<sup>[4]</sup>

## 2 Government

The Duchy of Grand Fenwick is a monarchy led by Duchess Gloriana XII. In the novel *The Mouse that Roared*, she is a young woman; in the 1959 film version, she is a parody of **Queen Victoria** who is still wearing mourning for her husband, Prince Louis of Bosnia-Herzegovina, who has been “missing” from a tiger hunt for 27 years. She thinks the President of the United States is **Calvin Coolidge**, and she owns the only motorcar in the Duchy—a 1920s’ hand-cranked model.

The nation has two political parties, the Dilutionists, led by David Bentner, and the Anti-Dilutionists, led by Count Mountjoy, the Prime Minister. The names of the parties reflect their positions on whether to dilute the wine exports of the Duchy. The positions of leadership are **hereditary**.

## 3 National flag



Flag of Grand Fenwick

A **double-headed eagle**<sup>[5]</sup> saying “Aye” from one beak and “Nay” from another. Sir Roger recorded that he only learned three things in his two years at **Oxford University**:

1. That “Aye” might be turned into “Nay” and vice versa if a sufficient quantity of wordage was applied to the matter.
2. In any argument the victor is always right.
3. Though the pen is mightier than the sword, the sword speaks louder and stronger at any given moment.<sup>[6]</sup>

## 4 Defence forces

The Grand Fenwick Expeditionary Force consists of 20 bowmen selected from 700 in the Duchy and three men-at-arms selected from 20 who have the right to carry spear and mace. They are clad in mail and armed with longbows. They are led by Forester Tully Bascomb, appointed High Constable, and Serjeant-at-Arms Will Buckley (who had World War II experience with the British Army).

In *Beware of the Mouse* it is stated that Grand Fenwick's constitution is amended to state that no weapon more modern than the longbow will be used by the nation's army. The longbow is a vital part of the country's history, its borders originally determined by the distance a platoon of bowmen could shoot in each direction. (In real life at the time, the extent of a country's territorial waters were defined by the three-mile limit, which is traditionally thought to be based on the effective range of a cannon fired from coastal land toward the sea).

In the film *The Mouse on the Moon*, Grand Fenwick is shown to have a small military force dressed similar to the Brigade of Guards and armed with rifles.

## 5 The novels

In *The Mouse That Roared* (1955), the Duchy seeks to stop American counterfeiting of Pinot Grand Fenwick. Grand Fenwick's formal protests are ignored by U.S. State Department employees, who think the documents are pranks. Grand Fenwick then plans an attack on the United States, certain this will lead to immediate defeat followed by generous American aid. The Grand Fenwick Expeditionary Force lands when the streets of New York are deserted during a nuclear attack drill. Ultimately they take prisoners and return to Grand Fenwick. One captive is the inventor of the Q-bomb, and the Duchy finds itself the possessor of the only working model of this devastating weapon. Grand Fenwick forms an alliance of small nations, the *Tiny Twenty*, and uses its control of the bomb to obtain world peace.

*Beware of the Mouse* (1958) is set in the Middle Ages and explains the historical origin of Grand Fenwick.

In *The Mouse on the Moon* (1962), Grand Fenwick beats the U.S. and the Soviet Union in a space race by using a new rocket fuel, the secret ingredient for which is found in a "premier grand cru" crop of Pinot Grand Fenwick.

In *The Mouse on Wall Street* (1969), the Duchy disrupts the world's finances. In an attempt to dispose of a sizable royalty payment from an American chewing gum company by investing it in failing companies, Duchess Gloriana finds she has the Midas touch for the stock market, and in a flurry of rumor and assumption, the Duchy becomes a financial superpower.

In *The Mouse that Saved the West* (1981), it is discovered that the Duchy is sitting on the largest oil deposit in the world.

## 6 Other appearances

A 1966 television pilot featuring Sid Caesar in several roles was filmed but never picked up as a series.<sup>[7]</sup>

Grand Fenwick is mentioned in *The New Traveller's Almanac*, part of the series *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

In the comic *Aetheric Mechanics*, Grand Fenwick is stated to have been annexed by Ruritania.

Grand Fenwick is also used in Project Euler to create the context of problem 314.<sup>[8]</sup>

In the shared alternate history of Ill Bethisad (1997 and after), Grand Fenwick is an actual country located between France and Helvetia (this world's version of Switzerland).<sup>[9][10]</sup> Within Ill Bethisad, it is the smallest country in the world, being only 15 sq mi (39 km<sup>2</sup>) in size.<sup>[11]</sup>

*The Royal Archduke of Grand Fenwick* is a non-existent play used by Barney Stinson to seduce an art collector in the *How I Met Your Mother* episode "The Ashtray".

## 7 Film adaptations

- *The Mouse That Roared*
- *The Mouse on the Moon*

## 8 References

- [1] Wibberley, Leonard (1955). *The Mouse That Roared*
- [2] [The Mouse that Roared {film}]
- [3] <http://users.tpg.com.au/orbco/The%20True%20Location%20of%20Grand%20Fenwick.html>
- [4] [The Mouse that Roared {Film}]
- [5] Wibberley, Leonard (1958). *Beware of the Mouse*. p. 102. a surcoat displaying the charge of his dukedom - a double-headed eagle, gules, on a field argent
- [6] Wibberley, Leonard (1955). *The Mouse That Roared*
- [7] Terrace, Vincent *Encyclopedia of Television Pilots, 1937-2012* McFarland, 01/01/2013
- [8] <http://projecteuler.net/problem=314>
- [9] <http://www.bethisad.com/maps.htm>
- [10] [http://ib.fraith.net/w/Grand\\_Fenwick](http://ib.fraith.net/w/Grand_Fenwick)
- [11] [http://ib.fraith.net/w/Grand\\_Fenwick](http://ib.fraith.net/w/Grand_Fenwick)

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