Government

The Shire had little in the way of government. The Mayor of Michel Delving was the chief official and was treated in practice as the Mayor of the Shire. There was a Message Service for post, and the 12 "Shirriffs" (three for each Farthing) of the Watch for police; their chief duties were rounding up stray livestock. These were supplemented by a varying number of "Bounders", an unofficial border force. At the time of The Lord of the Rings, there were many more Bounders than usual, one of the few signs for the hobbits of that troubled time. The heads of major families exerted authority over their own areas.

The Master of Buckland, hereditary head of the Brandybuck clan, ruled Buckland and had some authority over the Marish, just across the Brandywine River.

Similarly, the head of the Took clan, often called "The Took", ruled the ancestral Took dwelling of Great Smials, the village of Tuckborough, and the area of The Tookland. He held the office of Thain.