History

The Shire was first settled by hobbits in the year 1601 of the Third Age (Year 1 in Shire Reckoning); they were led by the brothers Marcho and Blanco. The hobbits from the vale of Anduin had migrated west over the perilous Misty Mountains, living in the wilds of Eriador before moving to the Shire.

After the fall of Arnor, the Shire remained a self-governing realm; the Shire-folk chose a Thain to hold the king's powers. The first Thains were the heads of the Oldbuck clan. When the Oldbucks settled Buckland, the position of Thain was peacefully transferred to the Took clan. The Shire was covertly protected by Rangers of the North, who watched the borders and kept out intruders. Generally the only strangers entering the Shire were Dwarves travelling on the Great Road from their mines in the Blue Mountains, and occasional Elves on their way to the Grey Havens. In S.R. 1147 the hobbits defeated an invasion of Orcs at the Battle of Greenfields; in the Fell Winter of S.R. 1311-12, white wolves from Forodwaith invaded the Shire across the frozen Brandywine river. In S.R. 1158-60, thousands of hobbits perished in the Long Winter and the famine that followed.

The protagonists of The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings, Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, lived at Bag End, a luxurious smial or hobbit-burrow, dug into The Hill on the north side of the town of Hobbiton in the Westfarthing. In S.R. 1341 Bilbo Baggins left the Shire on the quest recounted in The Hobbit. He returned the following year, secretly bearing a magic ring. This turned out to be the One Ring. The Shire was invaded by four Ringwraiths in search of the Ring. While Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin were away on the quest to destroy the Ring, the Shire was taken over by Saruman through his underling Lotho Sackville-Baggins. They ran the Shire in a parody of a modern state, complete with armed ruffians, destruction of trees and handsome old buildings, and ugly industrialisation.

The Shire was liberated with the help of Frodo and his companions on their return at the Battle of Bywater (the final battle of the War of the Ring). The trees of the Shire were restored with soil from Galadriel's garden in Lothlórien (a gift to Sam). The year S.R. 1420 was considered by the inhabitants of the Shire to be the most productive and prosperous year in their history.