

FREE LEAGUE

VAESEN



MYTHIC BRITAIN & IRELAND



Based on the book *Vaesen* by
JOHAN EGERKRANS

MYTHIC BRITAIN & IRELAND

LEAD WRITER:
Graeme Davis

LEAD ARTIST:
Johan Egerkrans

MAPS:
Francesca Baerald,
Christian Granath

GRAPHIC DESIGN:
Dan Algstrand,
Christian Granath

ADDITIONAL WRITING:
Matthew Tyler-Jones,
Dave Semark

ADDITIONAL ART:
Anton Vitus,
Gustave Doré

GAME DIRECTOR:
Nils Karlén

THE YEAR ZERO GAME ENGINE:
Tomas Härenstam

PROJECT MANAGEMENT:
Tomas Härenstam,
Nils Karlén

EDITING:
Nils Hintze,

Tomas Härenstam

LAYOUT AND PREPRESS:
Dan Algstrand

PROOFREADING:
Brandon Bowling

PR MANAGER:
Boel Bermann

EVENT MANAGER:
Anna Westerling

STREAMING:
Doug Shute,
Matthew Jowett

CUSTOMER SUPPORT:
Daniel & Jenny Lehto

PLAYTESTERS:
Sofía Fernandez, Craig Coventry, Tom Pitchford,
Dan Thorpe, Matthew Tyler-Jones

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PREFACE

I GREW UP surrounded by folklore.

This is not to say that my childhood was spent in the bucolic, faerie-haunted English countryside. Far from it. But I learned to read early, and books filled my drab suburban life on the edge of London's Heathrow airport with traditional fairy tales and cosy children's stories populated by rosy-cheeked, flower-hatted feys, affable gnomes, and mischievous pixies.

Then Ray Harryhausen came along – or to be more accurate, at the impressionable age of six I saw *Jason and the Argonauts* on my parents' tiny, black-and-white television. That began my obsession with mythology. That Christmas, I asked a rather nonplussed department-store Santa for a book on Greek myth, and although he failed me (I got a model kit of a vintage car, in a particularly hideous yellow plastic), a few weeks later the travelling library stopped at my school and I found a children's retelling of Homer's *Odyssey* among its many treasures.

Over the next ten years I took Latin and classical studies at school, and prepared to study archaeology at university. My interest in myth and folklore took a back seat until some recently-graduated friends introduced me to a new and mysterious game from America called *Dungeons & Dragons*. In my first game I played a pair of thieves, both killed by a minotaur within the first twenty minutes. A minotaur! My Harryhausen memories came flooding back.

I quickly started designing my own dungeons, stocking them with monsters from the rulebook as well as others I knew from traditional sources that Mr. Gyax and his cohorts had somehow missed. Still I wanted more. I ransacked the folklore section of my local library – and the university library, after I got there – and kept on writing, sending articles to *White Dwarf* and other British gaming magazines until Games Workshop recruited me as a staff writer.

That was how it started. I never stopped reading myth and folklore, and I long dreamed of writing for a game that was... well, exactly like *Vaesen*. Except drawing from the folklore of Britain and Ireland.

Now, thanks to Free League and Johan Egerkrans, I'm doing just that, and I couldn't be happier. I hope you enjoy reading this book and untangling the Mysteries in these pages as much as I have enjoyed writing them.

Graeme Davis

DENVER, NOVEMBER 2021

MYTHIC
BRITAIN
& IRELAND

MDCCL

SHETLAND
ISLES

North
Sea

Atlantic
Ocean

Irish
Sea

English Channel



Miles
0 20 40 60 80 100
1 inch = 20 miles

ISLES OF SCILLY



I walked down the gangplank and set foot on land with a slight shock. Perhaps it was nothing more than the feel of terra firma underfoot after a rough sea crossing, but it felt as though London had a hard, unyielding solidity that was different from that of Stockholm or any other great port I had visited. Smoke, soot, and noise were everywhere, from the bellowed profanities of the dockers and their foremen to the racket of the cranes and winches, the whistles of ships docking or setting sail, and the hissing and grinding of the trains lined up to discharge or receive cargo. For a moment the whole city seemed like a single, titanic machine, and I feared being crushed between its gears. Then I felt a brush against my side, and saw a small figure scamper away clutching my pocket-watch in one hand. It glanced back at me as it rounded the corner, and I caught a glimpse of a face that was nothing like that of a child pickpocket.



MYTHIC BRITAIN AND IRELAND

WELCOME TO BRITAIN and Ireland, as found in the world of *Vaesen*. London is the heart of a thriving Empire, ruled by Queen Victoria. Railway lines radiate out from the capital, connecting it to the nation's other great cities and carrying people and goods to all parts of the country. Between the cities, the countryside remains much as it has since the Middle Ages, ruled by the twin forces of tradition and superstition.

Every year, more people move from the countryside to the cities, in search of factory jobs and a better life. Some of their supernatural neighbors have moved with them, sometimes lending their aid against the grime, exploitation, poverty, and injustice of city life.

Within these pages you will find a complete guide to mythic Britain and Ireland, including the great city of London, the countryside beyond, and the four nations that occupy the islands: England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The union, based on conquest and maintained by force when necessary, is fraught with cultural differences and ancient grievances. National and regional differences are further complicated by conflicts between the declining nobility and the rising industrial class, between the wealthy employers and the struggling workers, between the native townsfolk and the new arrivals — and between the mortal and supernatural worlds.

These islands – consisting of Great Britain, Ireland, and a number of smaller islands – have always been more of a geographical entity than a political one. At the time of this game they are uneasily united under the rule of Queen Victoria’s government in London, but beneath the surface of the United Kingdom that covered the whole of these islands there are national and regional divisions as well as divisions of class, wealth, and politics.

This chapter describes mythic Britain and the conflicts that beset it in this age of industrialization and urbanization. London – the heart of the British Empire and the home of the Apollonian Society – is described in detail, with notes on significant locations and suggestions on using them in your game. Briefer descriptions are given of other important cities in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

FOUR NATIONS

The islands are home to four nations: England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. All are united under the British crown – more or less unwillingly – within the union known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. “Great Britain” refers to the largest island in the group, which consists of England, Scotland, and Wales.

England is the largest, richest, and most influential kingdom in the union. The other nations are ruled by government departments based in London. The people of London and the south-east, known as the “Home Counties”, look down on the other regions and are disliked in return. Those from the industrial north are dismissed as ignorant drones, while the inhabitants of the rural west and the fen counties of East Anglia are seen as inbred, half-wit yokels. The dislike goes both ways, though, as southerners are widely seen as “soft”, effete, and untrustworthy, living off the fruits of others’ labors and giving themselves airs that have no factual justification.

Wales was conquered in the late 13th century. Its native language and culture were suppressed over the following centuries, but are still strong in the mountainous interior of the country. In the past it was known mainly for sheep farming, but in recent decades its great coal reserves have fed the industries of the whole kingdom. Coal and slate are mined in many places, and brought down the steep-sided valleys by rail.

Scotland was a separate kingdom until 1603, when King James VI inherited the crown of England. There were many who fought for Scottish independence,

HISTORY AND FANTASY

Rather than trying to achieve strict historical accuracy – an impossible task in a book of this size – we have chosen to present an amalgam of historical reality with popular imagery from contemporary and later books, films, and other sources, covering a period roughly from 1860 to 1900. The intention is to present an idealized, slightly timeless version, suitable as a backdrop for the activities of the player characters and the islands’ supernatural inhabitants. To any who are offended by incorrect or absent details, our apologies – but feel free to use your knowledge to add detail and nuance to your own games.

It is up to you to decide whether your particular game takes place at a particular time or in a particular place that can be researched for accuracy, or whether you prefer a more general approach to the Victorian era. History, geography, technology, and politics are all at your discretion. If you choose a higher degree of historical accuracy, be prepared to be a little flexible if necessary in order to enhance the story and the players’ enjoyment of the game. History should be a servant giving the game a distinctive flavor rather than a master stifling possibilities.

but the union of the crowns became an English conquest in all but name. Today, many English nobles have Scottish estates where they hunt deer and grouse. Scotland's cities are known for their industry and the quality of their universities. Scottish doctors, engineers, and teachers are respected throughout the Empire, and the Highland regiments are among the elite forces of the British Army. By contrast, the traditional way of life and the Gaelic language persist in the Highlands and islands.

Ireland is torn by conflict. Efforts to pacify the island under English rule began in the 12th century and have never been fully successful. Ireland has been mismanaged by absentee landlords from England, resulting in famines and other injustices. Distrust of the country's Catholic faith led to a colony of Protestants from Scotland being planted in the north in the early 17th century, causing further resentment and division. Rebellions have been common, and have been dealt with brutally. A growing movement for independence, made up of various groups united under the name of Fenians, is becoming more organized and more violent.

CONFLICTS IN SOCIETY

Industrialization is spreading as rapidly here as it is across Europe. Many traditional crafts are being replaced by factories and machines, and people are leaving the countryside to seek work in the growing cities.

The cities themselves are sharply divided along multiple lines of fracture.

The traditional wealth and privilege of the nobility are increasingly threatened by the "*nouveaux riches*", who made their money "by trade" (as the upper crust say with a disdainful sniff). To the nobility and gentry with their private incomes and university educations, these hard-working and largely-self-educated people seem coarse, with ideas above their appointed social station. To the wealthy industrialists, the "toffs" are arrogant, lazy, and out of touch – although many long to be accepted into their society.



FENIAN FAIRIES, AND OTHERS

While the Fenians and other Irish groups are the most vocal and visible movements for independence from English rule, similar groups are also active in Scotland and Wales. Thanks in large part to the Romantic movement in art and literature, each of these three Celtic nations is experiencing a revival of its traditional culture and language. Political pressure is growing to grant them more of a say in their own affairs than the government in London currently permits.

At the Gamemaster's option, these independence movements could have gone beyond their historically documented efforts and made alliances with their supernatural neighbors. Adding supernatural elements to these complex and volatile political situations can make for some intriguing and challenging mysteries as the player characters must negotiate mortal conflicts about which they may be dangerously ill-informed while trying to investigate supernatural threats at the same time.

Added to these complications is the fact that supernatural beings seldom grant favors without a cost, and even the most devoted fighter in the cause of freedom might try to get out of a bargain which requires them to surrender their first-born child or pay some equally disagreeable price. Needless to say, fairies and their kin expect mortals to keep their promises to the letter, and the bargains they make are often darker than they appear at first glance.

THE OLD WAYS AND THE NEW

Times are changing. Industrialization is leading to the expansion of towns and cities and a migration from the countryside. In Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, British rule – English rule, in effect – is opposed by a diverse range of groups. Romantic writers and artists work to preserve the disappearing heritage of their homelands. Social reformers and socialist organizers campaign for more power to be put in local hands, often as part of a broader agenda aimed at addressing social injustices. Some take more direct action, like the Fenian paramilitary groups of Ireland.

In addition to its own history, culture, language, and traditions, each of these nations has its own supernatural population, who are as different from their English counterparts as their mortal neighbors are. These differences can fuel mysteries in a number of ways; here are a few examples:

- ✦ Incoming English landowners know nothing of local traditions, and care even less. This makes them especially prone to offending local supernatural creatures, and that can have terrible consequences for the whole area.
- ✦ English supernatural creatures accompany mortal settlers, leading to conflict with the native population, both mortal and supernatural.
- ✦ A group of romantic traditionalists try to make contact with local supernatural creatures, hoping they will help in preserving the old ways and even resist the English or English-aligned local elite. They may gain powerful allies, but their help may come at a cost and their different morality may lead to disasters and atrocities far beyond what the romantics envisaged.
- ✦ Alternatively, the supernatural population may not be interested in mortal affairs. They could ignore the whole situation completely apart from punishing those who dared to bother them, or they could decide to force all mortals out of their territory, either because they are tired of the whole lot of them or because they cannot tell one kind of mortal from another.

A similar divide exists between the factory owners and the working poor. The hopefuls who come to the factory towns in search of a better life often find themselves ruthlessly exploited, overworked, underpaid and subjected to appalling conditions with no regard for their safety. There are always plenty of hopefuls looking for work, so troublemakers are sacked and the sick and injured are cast off callously. Some of the smaller towns are built around a single mine or factory, giving the owners absolute power over the population. In larger cities, word of trouble travels between factory owners – especially if it involves attempts to organize the labor force and agitate for workers' rights – and troublemakers can quickly find themselves unemployed, destitute, and shunned by neighbors who fear similar treatment. From time to time a mass movement springs up, only to be brutally put down by hired

thugs or, if it grows big enough, suppressed by the police and the army as a threat to public order.

Another conflict is that between born-and-bred townsfolk and newcomers from the countryside. At its mildest, it takes the form of jibes and pranks at the expense of the “yokels,” but it can turn violent if there is competition for jobs, housing, or other necessities.

Dirt and disease are rampant in the cities, with open sewers flowing into the same rivers that are fished for food. The urban poor live in crumbling tenements that can barely keep out the weather, often with whole families crammed into a single damp and rat-infested room. Their resentment sometimes boils over into strikes and protests, and their plight is beginning to draw the attention of social and moral reformers such as Charles Dickens. The middle class is beginning to worry about the link between poverty, desperation, and

CURRENCY

Like many countries at this time, Britain does not use a decimal system for its currency. Some players may find the system difficult to navigate, but it is easily explained.

The main unit is the pound sterling (£), so called because when it began in the Middle Ages it was the value of one pound of silver. The symbol for a pound is a cursive, upper-case letter L with a stroke through it, derived from the Latin *libra*, meaning a pound weight.

One pound is divided into 20 shillings, and one shilling is divided into 12 pennies, or 'pence'.

Prices are expressed as numbers divided by slashes. For example, 17/6 is seventeen shillings and sixpence. If there are no pence, a dash is used: 2/- is two shillings.

A space, rather than a slash, is used between pounds and shillings: for example, £1 3/4 is one pound, three shillings and fourpence.

In some circumstances, the abbreviation s. is used for shillings and d. for pence. These are derived from the names of two Roman coins: the *solidus* and the *denarius*.

Bank notes are available in a number of denominations, though the most common are £1 and £5. Coins are available in the following denominations:

- ✦ **DOUBLE SOVEREIGN:** Gold, value £2.
- ✦ **GUINEA:** Gold, value £1 1/-. The upper classes reckon prices in guineas rather than pounds, as a sign of their wealth. Last minted in 1814, but some are still in circulation.
- ✦ **SOVEREIGN:** Gold, value £1.
- ✦ **HALF SOVEREIGN:** Gold, value 10/-.
- ✦ **CROWN:** Silver, value 5/-
- ✦ **HALF CROWN:** Silver, value 2/6.
- ✦ **FLORIN:** Silver, value 2/-
- ✦ **SHILLING:** Silver, value 1/-. Nicknamed a "bob".
- ✦ **SIXPENCE:** Silver, value 6d. Nicknamed a "tanner".
- ✦ **THREEPENCE:** Silver, value 3d. Commonly called a "thrupenny bit".
- ✦ **PENNY:** Bronze, value 1d. Nicknamed a "copper".
- ✦ **HALFPENNY:** Bronze, value ½d. Generally pronounced "ha'penny", to rhyme with "ape knee".
- ✦ **FARTHING:** Bronze, value ¼d.
- ✦ **HALF FARTHING, THIRD FARTHING and QUARTER FARTHING** coins are also in circulation.

crime, and well-meaning individuals are sometimes found preaching or staffing hostels and soup kitchens in the poorer parts of London and other cities.

London, as a great port city and the capital of a vast and expanding empire, is seeing another conflict: that between the English and immigrants. While ports across the islands are used to seeing foreign sailors and merchants, locals become uncomfortable when foreigners are seen outside the narrowly prescribed confines of a port – especially when they start moving into middle-class areas and showing other signs of material success. Social ostracism and occasional violence are used to discourage them from sully the pristine Englishness of "respectable areas" with their "foreign ways."

Conflicts in the countryside are more muted than those in the cities, but they are still there. The main conflicts are between the landowners and their tenants – or rather, those who work for the landlords, for the nobility seldom deals with the peasantry face to face. While none can deny that the condition of the rural poor has improved since the Middle Ages, bailiffs still evict families who cannot pay rent and gamekeepers are locked in a never-ending war with poachers. The local squire, violent and corrupt with an eye for a pretty and helpless farmer's daughter, is a stock character in melodramas, while the drunken and tyrannical magistrate is another – for good reason in both cases.

CITY LIFE

Life in the great cities is much the same as in growing industrial cities across Europe (see *Vaesen*, pages 100–101). Many are drawn to the cities by the promise of jobs and housing, but far from finding streets paved with gold, newcomers from the country find exploitation and squalor. Conditions are starting to improve thanks to the work of social reformers like Charles Dickens and religious and temperance crusaders like the Salvation Army as well as individual urban clergymen, but progress is slow and uneven.

Even so, the towns generate great wealth and life for the rising middle class has never been better. New products and labor-saving devices are constantly appearing on the market, and great efforts are being made by various charities and social reformers

to provide educational and ‘improving’ lectures for the working classes, to help them advance their prospects in life and to give them an alternative to spending their free time in the numerous pubs and gin-mills. ‘Good works’ are an absolute necessity for middle-class wives aiming at respectability and social advancement. Not content with good works alone, many educated women are campaigning for the right to vote, which is currently restricted to male landowners.

At the same time, urban police forces are becoming more organized and efforts are under way to address the epidemics of crime and lawlessness that threaten the poorer areas of many cities. As well as putting uniformed officers on the streets, the authorities are advancing the science of criminology to help solve more complex cases.

SOCIAL CLASS (OPTIONAL)

Class is an essential part of society at this time. The Gamesmaster can decide whether or not to include modifiers for class difference when the player characters deal with NPCs.

Society is divided into three broad classes, with a number of distinctions within each class.

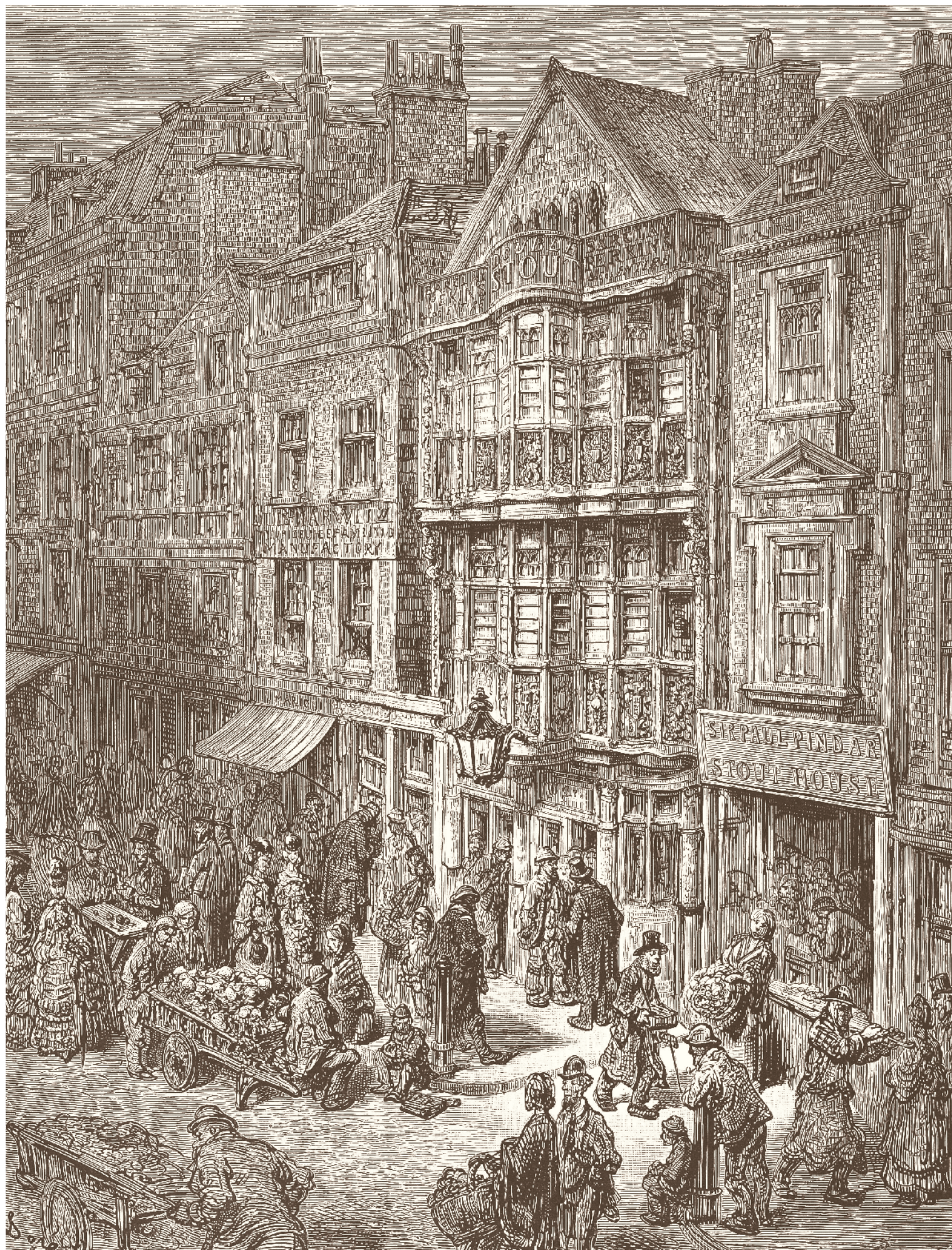
The Nobility are the ruling class. They do not work, relying instead on rents from their lands for income. While many nobles are still rich, some families have been forced to sell off their lands, or have lost them through marriage, and are impoverished. Even so, they are expected to live to a certain standard, and some – especially in popular fiction – have resorted to dishonest means in order to do so.

The Middle Class is the bourgeoisie, and is sometimes known as the professional class. These are the white-collar workers, ranging from high-priced lawyers (known as barristers) and bankers to humble clerks. The growth of industrialization has led to an influx of wealthy factory and mine owners into this

class, although they are not entirely welcome. The white-collar middle class regards them as uncouth, and they regard the rest of the middle class as snobbish and “stuck up”. Master artisans, whose work can be regarded as both art and craft, are generally acknowledged to be middle-class, as long as they behave appropriately.

The Working Class, or tradesman class, consists of everybody else, from skilled workers to simple laborers.

When two characters of different classes are interacting, the lower-status individual is expected to show deference and respect. Optionally, this can be reflected by changing the difficulty of the lower-ranking character’s tests. When dealing with a person of lower status, all Empathy tests have a +1 bonus per level of class difference. When dealing with a person of higher status, there is a –1 penalty per level of class difference. So when a noble character is talking to a working-class character, the noble has a +2 bonus to Empathy tests and the other has a –2 penalty.



Most of the largest cities are ports, and goods flow into the country from all corners of the world. It is said that the sun never sets on the far-flung British Empire, and goods flow into London and the other ports from Africa, India, Asia, the Caribbean, and many lesser colonies. Machinery and manufactured goods flow in the opposite direction, ensuring that the nation's docks are never quiet.

In the shadows of London, the 'great game' plays itself out as agents of rival European powers seek to steal information and undermine the British Empire. A few go beyond London, making contact with local independence groups and other malcontents so they can use them for their own ends.

More frightening than foreign agents, criminals, and revolutionaries, though, are the shadowy figures whose exploits are splashed across the front pages of

city newspapers and recounted with salacious glee in the cheap and fantastically popular 'penny dreadful' books. Jack the Ripper has achieved a kind of immortality, but he was far from alone.

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

— WILLIAM BLAKE, *LONDON*.

HUMAN MONSTERS

The burgeoning press of the day feeds the public appetite for sensation with a number of lurid tales, some based on fact and some not. In later times, many of these accounts will be categorized as urban myths. For now, though, it is hard to distinguish between fact and fiction – or between the mundane and the supernatural.

The serial killer whom the press dubbed 'Jack the Ripper' terrorized the slums of Whitechapel in London's East End between 1888 and 1891, murdering at least five women and mutilating their bodies in a shocking manner. He was never caught and has never been identified, and no one knows why he apparently stopped killing.

Spring-Heeled Jack was first sighted in London in 1837, and has been seen all over the country since. Some are speculating that the original Jack must be too old to still be active, and must surely have passed his mantle to a successor. Springing from the darkness to

assault young women, Jack always evaded capture by leaping over high walls and other obstacles that would be impossible for a normal person to jump. He later took to making unexpected appearances at doors or in gardens with the apparent aim of causing fear for its own sake. Sightings continued as late as 1888.

Sweeney Todd, the demon barber of Fleet Street, and his associate Mrs. Lovett the pie-maker were invented in 1850 by an unknown author but many believed that the tale was based on fact.

Burke and Hare killed 16 people in Edinburgh over a period of ten months, selling their bodies to a physician named Robert Knox for dissection in his anatomy lectures. They were originally part of a class of criminals called 'resurrection men', who stole fresh corpses from graveyards, but are said to have found murder an easier way to supply the medical profession's demand for bodies. Their career inspired several imitators, who became known as 'burkers'.

IMPORTANT CITIES

The business of the Society can take player characters to all corners of the land. The major cities of the islands are described below.

LONDON

Burgeoning industrialization and the growth of Empire have seen London almost triple in size over recent decades. Today it is home to almost 20% of the entire population of these islands, and the suburbs are continually expanding.

It is a city of contrasts, from the grand architecture of the government buildings in Whitehall and the financial institutions of the City to the filth and disease of the riverside tenements and the rampant crime in places where the police either do not dare or care to go.

A ring of grand railway stations anchors the growing rail network that links London to the rest of the country, making it possible to reach almost anywhere in Great Britain within one or two days. Inside the city, a growing underground railway network carries the well-to-do beneath the crowded and muddy streets.

50 BERKELEY SQUARE

This house in London's Mayfair is said to be one of the most haunted in London. It is believed that the attic room is haunted by the ghost of a young woman who committed suicide there, and several other apparitions have been seen in other parts of the house.

EDINBURGH

Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland. The arrival of the railway linking it to London stimulated commerce, and the city center is thriving. The disease-ridden slums of the Old Town are slowly being improved, but are still blanketed by a permanent cloud of coal smoke that has given the town its nickname of “auld Reekie”.

EDINBURGH'S FAIRY COFFINS

Arthur's Seat is a hill of volcanic rock at the edge of Edinburgh. In 1836, three boys hunting for rabbits uncovered a small cave, closed with slate, with seventeen tiny coffins inside, all about 3–4 inches (8–10 cm) long and containing tiny wooden corpses. Are these really fairy burials, and if so, how will the local fairy community react to the desecration of their graveyard?

GLASGOW

The most populous city in Scotland and the second largest in Britain, Glasgow is a tough port city driven by commerce and industry. Shipbuilding is a major industry, and passage can be booked to almost anywhere in the world from here.

JENNY WI' THE IRON TEETH

Glasgow Green is said to be haunted by a terrible hag with iron teeth, who drags children off to devour them. Her lair has never been found, but her name is remembered every time a child goes missing.

LIVERPOOL

Liverpool is another port city that owes its prosperity to the sea. Ferries cross the Irish Sea to Dublin and Belfast, and ships depart daily for all parts of the world. Many are carrying hopeful migrants to North America. People flock here from all parts of Europe, and some have settled in the city, giving it a cosmopolitan feel.

WAVERTREE HOLY WELL

In Wavertree, on the edge of Liverpool, stands a well that has been in use since the 15th century or earlier. It bears the inscription "Qui non dat quod habet, Dæmon infra vide" ("He who here does nought bestow, The Devil laughs at him below"). Wishing-wells are a common superstition, but these words seem to threaten more than they promise. What is the well's secret?

MANCHESTER

Manchester is expanding rapidly thanks to the growth of the textile industry. It is linked to the nearby port of Liverpool by one of the country's first railways, and a canal is being dug to carry even more cargo. The city is also a center of industrial engineering, with products exported throughout the British Empire and across the world. As in many industrial towns, the working population is beginning to organize and agitate for better housing, pay, and working conditions.

THE BLACKLEY BOGGART

About three miles from the center of Manchester is Boggart Hole Clough, an ancient woodland that is said to be haunted by a dangerous spirit. Boggarts are common throughout British folklore, invisible tricksters whose pranks are usually no more than annoying, but can sometimes turn deadly. It is said that in former times a local farmer moved his farm and his family to get away from the boggart, only to find it had followed him to his new home. Since then, some say, it has returned to Boggart Hole Clough, living in the farmhouse that has crumbled into ruins.



DUBLIN

The capital of Ireland was first founded by the Vikings in the 9th century. It has grown into a thriving city thanks to the wool and linen trades, and the architecture of the city's center is as fine as anything found in London. Its slums are as full of crime and disease as those of any other large city, though, and there are many who would like to see Ireland throw off British rule and become an independent nation.

THE DEMON CAT OF KILLAKEE

Killakee House stands in the hills to the south of Dublin, and has been the scene of many hauntings. Scratching sounds are often heard within the walls, as though an animal were trapped there, and a few people have been confronted by the apparition of a monstrous black cat, sometimes accompanied by a wall of thick mist. The ghosts of two nuns have also been seen. It is said locally that the house was used by the infamous Hellfire Club in the 18th century.

BELFAST

Belfast is a busy port with strong shipbuilding and engineering traditions. Its population is an uneasy mix of Catholic Irish newcomers from the countryside and Protestant Scotch-Irish who settled there in the 17th century. The Protestants are organizing to keep control of the city and access to good jobs out of Catholic hands, stoking tensions and giving rise to occasional sectarian riots.

SHAW'S BRIDGE

Shaw's Bridge straddles the River Lagan a little way inland from the busy port of Belfast. Nearby stands a great mound in a stone circle known locally as the Giant's Ring. Such sights have long been associated with the Irish fairies known as the *sidhe*, and people wandering too close to the site at night have been overtaken by a sudden fog and unable to find their way out for several hours. Getting mortals lost is a favorite fairy trick, but perhaps in this instance the *sidhe* are hiding something – the entrance to their hidden realm, perhaps, or something more...

CARDIFF

Cardiff has grown rapidly over the last century thanks to its position as a port and railway hub shipping coal from the mountainous interior of Wales to the industrial towns of Great Britain. Although Wales has not had a capital since its conquest by the English in the 13th century, Cardiff is its largest city and economic center.

TAFF'S WELL

A few miles outside Cardiff is a thermal spring called Taff's Well, which is haunted by the trapped spirit of a woman who beckons to those who go there for water. She begs them to hold her tightly until she asks to be released, but those who agree feel a sharp stab in their sides which forces them to let go. The woman's figure fades, lamenting that she must remain in bondage until someone with a better grip can help free her.

RURAL LIFE

Machines such as seed drills and horse-drawn harvesters are making farming more efficient, but on the whole rural life has changed little over the last century or so. Farmers rely on villages for basic services and sell their produce in the nearest market town, from which most of it is moved by rail to the cities.

A typical village consists of a parish church, a few basic shops, and one or more pubs. A larger village may also have a small police station and a doctor's office. Market towns are built around a market square, and have more pubs – often as many as a dozen – around the square and along the main street, to serve market-day customers. A town's population can almost double on market day as farmers and merchants come in to trade.

Rural Britons are inward-looking and distrustful of outsiders. City folk, in particular, are regarded as soft and untrustworthy, and may be greeted with a sullen silence or a barrage of “harmless” pranks.

The local community comes together on festival days, often with a feast and games on the village green. May-day is widely observed with children performing maypole dances, and the harvest is celebrated by a fair and a church service. Local saints' days and other traditional holidays are celebrated at various times and in various ways, according to the locality. They may include morris dancing, well dressing, mummer's plays, and other traditions, and are almost always accompanied by much drinking and feasting.

NEW TALENT: FOSTERED (GENERAL)

As an infant, you were stolen by the fairies and raised among them. You gain +2 to Empathy tests when dealing with fairies. Choose one magical power from page 130 of the *Vaesen* core rulebook: if you choose Enchant, Curse, or Trollcraft, specify the power. You may use this power once per session.

“Oh, I love London Society! It has immensely improved. It is entirely composed now of beautiful idiots and brilliant lunatics. Just what Society should be.”

– OSCAR WILDE.

LONDON – HEART OF EMPIRE

London is situated on the River Thames. The city has grown continuously since Roman times, and building work regularly turns up Roman and medieval remains, from abbey walls to plague cemeteries. Through the centuries it has endured multiple outbreaks of plague and a devastating fire that destroyed most of the wooden city and led to it being rebuilt in brick and stone. The greatest of these rebuildings was that of Saint Paul's cathedral, whose white dome has become a London landmark.

In many ways, London is two cities, side by side. The wealthy and powerful know the theaters and high-end shops of the West End, the financial district known simply as “The City”, and the government district of Westminster. Paved, clean, and gaslit, this London makes a sharp contrast with the East End with its busy docks and crime-ridden slums.

Almost every kind of profession, trade, and industry is present in London. The city continues to grow, with new suburbs being built along the main roads and railways that link it to the rest of the country. Precise estimates of London's population are hard to come by, as so many people come and go, but the total hovers around three million, making it the largest city in the world. Its size has tripled since the beginning of the century, largely due to an influx of people from the countryside and growing immigrant populations from all over the world.

THE TOWER OF LONDON

Built by King William I to overawe and subdue the city of London, the Tower is a sprawling complex of fortifications and other buildings that takes its name from the original “White Tower.” Over the centuries it has been used as both a palace and a prison. Anne Boleyn, the second wife of King Henry VIII, was imprisoned here before her execution, and her ghost is said to walk the Bloody Tower with her head under her arm. Another notorious episode was the alleged murder of the little princes by their uncle, Richard Duke of Gloucester, to ensure his rule as King Richard III.

Today, it is best known as the place where the Crown Jewels are secured, and it has been opened to the public to raise money for its upkeep. It is staffed and guarded by the Yeomen of the Guard in their colorful Tudor-style uniforms. Also famous are the ravens that are kept in the Tower. According to tradition, the kingdom will fall if they should ever leave.

THE TOWER OF LONDON

With its long and bloody history, the Tower of London makes an excellent setting for a mystery, if the player characters can gain access to it. According to legend, the head of the legendary king Brân the Blessed was buried on Tower Hill centuries before the Tower was built. It faces France in order to ward off invasion. England has not faced such a threat since the Napoleonic Wars, but foreign agents may be interested in finding the head and removing or destroying it. They may find themselves opposed by the ravens (*Brân* means “raven” in Welsh) and other supernatural protectors.

FOREIGN ENCLAVES

As the capital of the British Empire and the largest city in the world, London is home to people from all over the globe. Many have settled there, creating their own communities and possibly bringing the supernatural creatures of their homelands with them.

Many Irish people came to London to escape the great famine of 1845–1849. By 1853, it was estimated that some 200,000 Irish people lived in the city, giving London an Irish population equivalent to the cities of Limerick, Belfast, and Cork combined.

Other ethnic groups also came to the city. Toward the end of the century, Jews fleeing persecution in Europe settled in London's East End, many working in the clothing industry (‘the rag trade’, as it is known informally) around Houndsditch and Petticoat Lane market. In 1882, their numbers were estimated at 46,000. Soho and Clerkenwell saw the growth of an Italian community estimated at 11,500 individuals. Chinese sailors settled in Limehouse and racial prejudice quickly gave the area an unsavory reputation as a den of vice, crime, and opium. Indian sailors, mostly in transit, can be found in boarding houses around the docks.

Smaller communities of Greeks, Germans, and other nationalities can also be found around London. Roma – the erroneous term ‘gypsy’ is not yet seen as offensive – have a foothold in London but many travel the countryside in their distinctive and colorful caravans, making a living as peddlers, casual agricultural laborers, and fortune tellers. Many people believe that they have closer ties to the supernatural world than ‘ordinary’ people, which leads some to seek their help and others to persecute them.

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Rebuilt in stone by Sir Christopher Wren after the destruction of the medieval cathedral in the great fire of 1666, St. Paul's is the seat of the Anglican Bishop of London. It is a great landmark and all Londoners regard it with pride and affection, even though the Church of England is not a great power in the land.

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

According to an unconfirmed tradition, St. Paul's Cathedral was built on the site of a Roman-era temple to the goddess Diana – and according to Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Diana was a daughter of Oberon, King of the Fairies. The construction of "Old St. Paul's" began in 1087 after a fire destroyed its predecessor. It took more than 200 years and was interrupted by another fire in 1135. It was damaged by a lightning strike in 1561, and destroyed again in the Great Fire of London in 1666. Was this the work of the fairies? No one knows for sure. The "new" cathedral has stood for almost 200 years without incident, but there have been long intervals of peace before. What must be done to keep peace with the faeries, who normally abhor the symbols of Christianity? What might happen if these agreements are broken or neglected?

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

There has been a church on this site since the 7th century, and the present building dates back to 1245. This is the burial place of kings and queens, as well as literary notables in the famed "Poets Corner." Its clergy report directly to the Queen in her capacity as head of the Church of England, and it is the church of choice for coronations, royal weddings, and state funerals.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

The Abbey has a long history and a strong connection with the Royal Family, making it an interesting location for a mystery set among the cream of London society. Among other ghosts, it is said to be haunted by "Father Benedictus", the ghost of a monk from the Middle Ages. He bothers no-one, walking around the cloisters before disappearing into a wall, and on at least one occasion he has helped visitors find their way out of the building, talking to them normally and appearing to be alive. What is it that keeps him tethered to this sacred site?

THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Officially known as the Palace of Westminster, the Houses of Parliament were rebuilt in the Gothic style after a fire destroyed much of the original palace buildings in 1834. Here, the two chambers of Parliament – the elected Commons and the noble Lords – conduct the business of government. Nearby Whitehall houses the sprawling civil service that administers the nation and the empire, while across St. James's Park is Buckingham Palace, the monarch's London residence.

THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

The Palace of Westminster has stood on this site since 1097. It has seen its share of intrigue and violence, including the execution of Scottish independence fighter William Wallace in 1305. A number of hauntings have been reported, including one attack on a police officer that sounds like the work of a mare. Given the building's position at the heart of government, though, the player characters will need considerable influence to be granted unrestricted access.



PARLIAMENT

The English Parliament dates back to the Middle Ages, and became the Parliament of the United Kingdom in 1707 following the union of England and Scotland. It consists of two chambers: the House of Commons, whose members are elected, and the House of Lords, whose members are the heads of noble families ('lords temporal') and the bishops and archbishops of the Church of England ('lords spiritual').

Only males over the age of 21 had the right to vote, and only then if they owned or rented land over a certain value. Voters elect a Member of Parliament (MP) for their electoral district, and the political party that wins the majority of seats in the House of Commons is invited by the monarch to form a

government in her name, with the party's leader becoming Prime Minister.

Wales, Scotland, and Ireland are ruled from Westminster through government departments, which causes resentment in those countries, where many feel marginalized by the English ruling elite. The overseas territories of the British Empire and Commonwealth are administered by the Colonial Office, from which officials are sent out to all corners of the earth.

The major political parties through most of the 19th century are the Conservative Party, known as 'Tories', and the Liberal Party, known as 'Whigs'. The Labour Party was founded in 1860 but made little headway before 1900.



THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The British Museum first opened in 1759, and its collections have grown as the British Empire spreads around the globe and British explorers uncover new wonders. Its archaeological collections are regarded as second to none, and the reading room holds one of the finest research libraries in the country.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Given its extensive collections of antiquities, from Egyptian mummies to shamanic equipment from all over the world, the museum is ripe for attack by any number of supernatural beings, and not only native British vaesen. It is also one of the best places in London to conduct research into almost any subject.

SCOTLAND YARD

Not far from Whitehall is the famous headquarters of London's Metropolitan Police Force. The city's police wear distinctive navy-blue uniforms with tall helmets, and carry truncheons. Firearms are only carried by special order.

SCOTLAND YARD

Although their official jurisdiction is limited to London, the detectives of Scotland Yard are consulted by police forces all over the country and all over the world. A Scotland Yard detective can be an invaluable contact for a group of player characters, and Scotland Yard provides an excellent background for a private detective character. Since they are regularly called upon to investigate grisly murders and other baffling cases, police detectives are more likely than many folk to encounter the supernatural and be changed by their experiences.

HIGHGATE CEMETERY

Just to the north of the City of London, Highgate Cemetery was opened in 1839. Its 35 acres, divided into the east and west cemeteries, quickly became the burial ground of choice for London's wealthy elite, its wooded grounds filled with great Gothic tombs and memorials. Quiet, secluded and serene, the cemetery quickly earned a reputation for mysterious events and hauntings. Following unexplained assaults on mourners after dark, people speak of the Highgate Vampire in hushed tones.

HIGHGATE CEMETERY

The cemetery was built on ground considered hallowed by pagan legend, and it was neither cleansed nor blessed properly by Charles Blomfield, the Bishop of London. In part, perhaps, this was because he lacked the Sight. The ground has drawn some turbulent force to it. Is the dark presence an evil spirit, an evil mortal, or something else entirely? And why does the now-elderly Bishop of London walk the cemetery's paths night after night?

HYDE PARK

The largest of London's parks, Hyde Park covers some 350 acres (142 hectares), its western end merging with Kensington Gardens. In the Middle Ages it was a royal hunting park, transforming as the city grew up around it into a pleasant green space crisscrossed by tree-lined avenues, with a lake called the Serpentine at its heart. Well-to-do Londoners come here to stroll and ride whenever the weather permits.

HYDE PARK

The park is a good place for a stroll and an even better place for a confidential meeting. While it is a very public place, those who come here to walk or ride take little notice of those around them, and anyone who is dressed in middle-class or better clothing will not attract any notice.

THE TIMES

The Times is the most authoritative newspaper in the British Empire, and is distributed by train and ship throughout Britain and the empire. It is read by anyone who wishes to be taken seriously in society, and its veracity is unquestioned. While it is not the only newspaper in the world to bear the name *Times*, the absence of a city name underscores the fact that this is *The Times* – the only one that matters.

THE TIMES

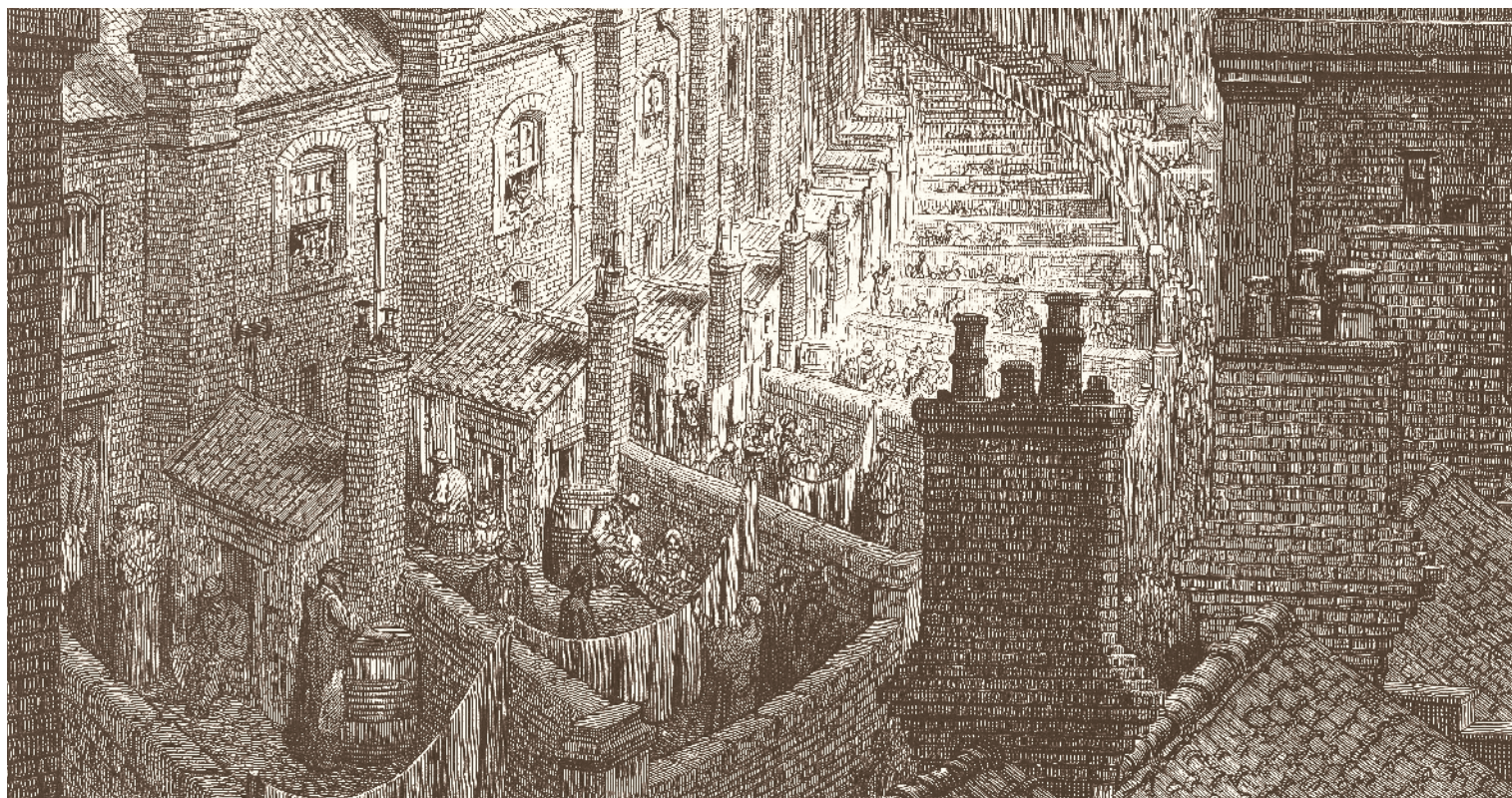
As Britain's newspaper of record, the offices of *The Times* are an excellent place to make inquiries into any recent events in London, Britain, or across the Empire. Its staff of reporters and researchers can put their hands on almost any information as a favor for a friend, although they are careful not to reveal *anything that could compromise the nation's security or standing in the world*.

ST. BART'S HOSPITAL

St. Bartholomew's Hospital dates back to the 12th century. A medical college was established there in 1843, and it is among the most famous teaching hospitals in the country.

ST. BART'S HOSPITAL

As well as being a useful resource for sick or wounded investigators, St. Bart's makes a good background for a doctor character. Contacts here can help with inquiries into any medical matter, and some senior members of staff may be researching diseases and other afflictions which, unknown to them, are supernatural rather than biological in origin.



BETHLEM HOSPITAL

Bethlem Hospital moved across the Thames to Southwark in 1815. One of London's oldest hospitals, it was founded in 1247. Over the centuries it became an asylum for the insane, and its nickname of Bedlam became a synonym for chaos and pandemonium. Even now, it is more of a prison than a hospital and its methods, while not as brutal as they once were, are still far from gentle.

BETHLEM HOSPITAL

A stay in Bedlam is never a pleasant experience, but it may help a player character who has suffered unbearable mental trauma. It is also quite possible that some of the patients here are quite sane, and have been admitted because they have encountered some supernatural creatures and refuse to be told that such things cannot be real.

LONDON ZOO

Opened in 1828, London Zoo is the oldest scientific zoo in the world, replacing the old Tower of London Menagerie. It is situated at the northern edge of Regent's Park. It was established by royal charter under the auspices of the Zoological Society of London, and although it is open to the public in order to raise money, its primary purpose is research. Animals from all over the world can be found here – including fish, for the zoo includes the world's first public aquarium. Explorers bring their finds from all over the world to be recorded in the society's publications and introduced to the world of science.

LONDON ZOO

While many of the samples – living and dead – that arrive at London Zoo daily are mundane creatures recently discovered by Western science, some may be of a less conventional nature. An escaped "sample" with supernatural powers could cause all kinds of havoc, requiring a contact of the Society's to ask for specialist help. On the other hand, the zoo's experts can help the player characters determine whether an encountered creature is supernatural or not.

THE RAILWAY TERMINI

London is linked to the rest of the country by a ring of seven railway termini: Paddington to Wales and the west of England; Euston to Birmingham, the north-west (and by ferry to Ireland) and western Scotland; King's Cross to York, Newcastle, and Edinburgh; St. Pancras to the Midlands and north of England; Liverpool Street to East Anglia; London Bridge to Kent and Sussex; and Waterloo to the port of Southampton and London's southern and western suburbs.

THE RAILWAYS

Trains are the best way to get around the country. The network is extensive and growing, and a player character can get from London to almost any other large city within a day. Boat trains link up with passenger ferries at most major ports. There are three classes of carriage, corresponding to the three classes of society and comfortable in proportion.

THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAY

Short stretches of a planned underground railway network are already in operation, carrying passengers between Paddington station at London's western edge and Farringdon at the center. The line carried 68,000 passengers on its opening day in January 1863, in gas-lit carriages hauled by steam locomotives.

THE UNDERGROUND

London's famous underground railway network is growing each year. Shallow tunnels are cut into surface streets and covered over once completed. Deeper tunnels are cut entirely underground. Construction is turning up traces of London's long history in many places, to the excitement of scholars. Once in a while, though, a tunnel breaks into something that was better left undisturbed.

THE LONDON NECROPOLIS RAILWAY

As London grew, its churchyards became overcrowded and larger cemeteries were opened on the edges of the city. Brookwood Cemetery, 23 miles (37 km) southwest of London, was the largest cemetery in the world at that time, and the London Necropolis Railway carried coffins and mourners there from a dedicated terminus called Cemetery Station, near the Waterloo terminus. The trains followed existing lines to the cemetery before taking a branch line to two stations: one for Anglicans (members of the Church of England), and one for everyone else.

HACKNEY MARSHES

To the east of London lie the Hackney Marshes, used for millennia to access the rivers north and south, as well as for light industry. From the turn of the century, over 300 acres were preserved for the local people, mostly poor factory and dock workers living in 'Ackney, as the local dialect has it. But some fear the place, and say that things lurk in the misty haze of dawn: "giant, growling, hairy" things, that will chase an unwary traveler. Some scoff, saying these creatures are natural: a bear that escaped from the circus perhaps, or dog of unusual size. Those who claim to have seen the creatures beg to differ, and never volunteer to return.

HACKNEY MARSHES

Are they spirits from the Roman occupation of the place, or from an even earlier Bronze Age settlement? And why are they encountered only when the sun is dawning?





NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

All of the NPC types presented in the *Vaesen* core rulebook (pages 166–167) may be found in Mythic Britain and Ireland. Here are some more, which can be used at the Game-master’s discretion. All of these types can also be found in Scandinavia and across Europe.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS							
ARCHETYPE	ATTRIBUTES:			TOUGHNESS:			SKILLS
	PHYSIQUE	PRECISION	LOGIC	EMPATHY	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	
Actor	2	3	3	4	1	2	Learning 1, Inspiration 4, Manipulation 3
Artisan	3	3	3	3	2	1	Agility 2, Force 2, Learning 2
Artist	2	3	3	3	1	2	Learning 2, Inspiration 2, Observation 3
Athlete	4	3	2	2	2	1	Agility 4, Force 3
Clerk	2	3	3	2	1	2	Learning 1, Vigilance 2, Observation 2
Councilor	2	3	3	3	1	2	Learning 2, Inspiration 3, Manipulation 3
Engineer	3	4	4	2	1	2	Agility 1, Force 2, Investigation 3
Explorer	3	4	3	3	2	2	Agility 3, Close Combat 2, Force 1, Ranged Combat 3
Factory Worker	2	2	2	2	2	1	Agility 2, Force 2, Vigilance 1
Fisherman	4	2	2	2	2	1	Agility 3, Force 2
Gambler	2	4	2	3	1	2	Agility 2, Manipulation 3, Observation 2
Herbwife	2	3	3	3	1	2	Medicine 2, Learning 2, Observation 2
Industrialist	2	4	3	2	1	2	Investigation 1, Learning 2, Manipulation 2
Laborer	3	2	2	2	2	1	Agility 2, Force 3, Close Combat 2

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

ARCHETYPE	ATTRIBUTES:			TOUGHNESS:			SKILLS
	PHYSIQUE	PRECISION	LOGIC	EMPATHY	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	
Lawyer	2	3	3	4	1	2	Learning 3, Inspiration 3, Manipulation 2
Miner	4	2	2	2	3	1	Agility 3, Force 3, Vigilance 2
Mudlark	2	2	2	2	2	1	Agility 2, Force 2, Investigation 3
Noble	2	2	2	2	1	2	Learning 2, Inspiration 2, Manipulation 2
Pauper	1	1	1	2	1	1	Agility 1, Vigilance 2, Manipulation 2
Prizefighter	4	3	2	2	3	1	Agility 3, Force 4, Close Combat 3
Reformer	2	3	2	4	1	2	Investigation 1, Vigilance 2, Inspiration 2, Manipulation 2
Resurrectionist	3	2	2	2	2	2	Agility 2, Force 2, Stealth 4
Revolutionary	3	3	2	3	2	2	Close Combat 1, Inspiration 2, Manipulation 2, Observation 2
Rogue	2	3	2	2	2	1	Agility 2, Close Combat 2, Stealth 3
Sailor	4	3	2	2	2	1	Agility 3, Force 3, Close Combat 3
Socialite	2	2	2	4	1	2	Inspiration 2, Manipulation 3, Observation 1
Squire	2	2	2	2	1	2	Investigation 1, Vigilance 2, Observation 2
Teacher	2	3	4	3	1	3	Investigation 1, Learning 3, Inspiration 2

CELEBRITY ENCOUNTERS

Mythic Britain and Ireland, and London in particular, offer the player characters the chance to encounter famous characters from history and literature, if you choose to add them to your games. Here are a few suggestions, although they are by no means the only possibilities. Dates of birth and death are given for real people.

There is only room for a brief summary of each person or character in these pages, but plenty of information is available for a Gamemaster who wants to develop any of them to use in a game.

Chief Inspector Frederick Abberline (1843–1929) is a Scotland Yard detective who plays a prominent role in the unsuccessful hunt for the notorious Jack the Ripper. Although his official records do not tell of any supernatural encounters, there could be a reason why he was assigned to the pursuit of this elusive killer.

Charles Babbage (1791–1871) is a pioneering mathematician and engineer whose Difference Engine and later Analytical Engine are capable of performing complex calculations far faster than any human mind – or would be, if he could fund their construction.

Dr. Thomas Barnardo (1845–1905) spent his life establishing orphanages and charitable schools. He also wrote no fewer than 192 books on charitable work and the relief of the poor. His charitable foundation grew to become the largest charity in the country.

Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) spent some time cultivating the reputation of ‘the wickedest man in England’. A member of the notorious Order of the Golden Dawn, he has published a number of books on magic and the occult, and his philosophy ‘do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law’ resonates with the nihilism of the decadent movement.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) is one of Britain’s most celebrated authors, and a tireless campaigner

for social reform. He was also an early member of the Ghost Club, a society for supernatural research founded in 1862, and although he wrote a number of ghost stories, there is no record of him ever having any encounters with the supernatural. In the world of *Vaesen*, of course, this could simply be because he chose not to make these encounters public knowledge.

Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832–1898) is better known by the pen name Lewis Carroll, under which he wrote *Alice in Wonderland*. He studied mathematics at Oxford and is an early member of the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882. Some have wondered whether his phantasmagorical tales were inspired by actual encounters with the supernatural.

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) is best known as the creator of Sherlock Holmes. He studied medicine and was an amateur football (soccer) and cricket player, a boxer, and a golfer. In contrast to Holmes’s famous skepticism, Doyle had a lifelong interest in mystical phenomena, and famously championed the ‘Cottingley Fairy’ hoax in 1920. In the world of *Vaesen*, it is possible that he possesses the Sight.

Sir Harry Flashman was developed from the school bully of the popular novel *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857) by 20th-century writer George MacDonald Fraser. The grown-up Flashman is a cad, a rake, and a coward who rises to the rank of Brigadier-General in the British Army through deception and misadventure, having joined the army after being expelled from his school.

Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock’s brother, works in some mysterious capacity for the Foreign Office of the British government. He is as capable as Sherlock is, but uses his abilities in the service of his country rather than taking cases from the public. Success against supernatural creatures can bring the player characters to Mycroft’s notice – especially if the

creatures are of foreign origin and the security of the British Empire is involved – and lead him to call on them in future crises.

Sherlock Holmes is a legendary detective, possibly the greatest who has ever lived. He has been called upon to investigate a number of cases that seemed to involve the supernatural, including *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Case of the Sussex Vampire*. All of the cases recounted by Doctor Watson have turned out to have completely mundane explanations, but who knows about those cases whose details were never published? If the player characters can impress Holmes with their abilities – and put up with his idiosyncratic and abrasive personality – he could make a habit of referring supernatural cases to them. It is recommended that you do not have him accompany the player characters on a case, though, since his formidable abilities could take much of the challenge out of a mystery.

Jack the Ripper killed and mutilated at least five women in the poor district of Whitechapel in 1888. He sent taunting letter to the police and others, but was never caught and his identity remains a mystery. There are many theories, including the suggestion that he was everything from an immigrant butcher to the Duke of Clarence, a grandson of Queen Victoria whose rank ensured that the investigation was steered toward other suspects. It has even been suggested that Jack was a supernatural predator of some kind.

Dr. Henry Jekyll is the protagonist of Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. A respectable doctor, Jekyll transforms into the hunched and malevolent Edward Hyde as the result of taking a serum he had developed with the intention of repressing his dark side.

Inspector Lestrade was Sherlock Holmes's main contact in Scotland Yard. He is a capable detective but constrained by conventional thinking, so he cannot rival Holmes. He consults him on a number of cases.



Ada Lovelace (1815–1852), the daughter of Romantic poet Lord Byron, did not follow in her father's footsteps. Instead, she developed an interest in mathematics and corresponded with Charles Babbage on the development of computing. Among other things, she put forward ideas that formed the foundation of later programming languages.

Professor James Moriarty is a master criminal who is Holmes's greatest rival. He apparently dies in 1891 in a fall from the top of the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland, in which Holmes himself appeared to have died.

Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) is a social reformer and the founder of the nursing profession. After becoming famous for treating wounded soldiers during the Crimean War of 1853–1856, she returned to London and set up a training school for nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital.

A. J. Raffles is a fictional 'gentleman thief' created by E. W. Hornung, the brother-in-law of Arthur Conan Doyle. A playboy and world-class cricketer on the surface, Raffles maintained his lifestyle as a gentleman through daring burglaries, which he commits as much for sport as for financial gain. He secretly despises the upper classes of whom he is a member, and regards their valuables as fair game. He is often accompanied by his timid and ineffectual friend, Harry 'Bunny' Manders.

Lord Shaftesbury (1801–1885) was an active campaigner for social reform, ranging from mental health to child labor and education. Thanks to his inherited position in the House of Lords, he was able to change a number of laws and affect the passing of many others.

Spring-Heeled Jack was reported across Britain between 1837 and 1904. A grotesque, possibly masked, figure, he leaps from cover to terrorize lone women and girls, escaping pursuit by making jumps of impossible height over walls and hedges. He is said to wear a close-fitting garment beneath a cloak. According to some reports he has iron claws on his fingers and can breathe out blue fire. He is variously thought to be a ghost, a demon, or a human in disguise.



Abraham ‘Bram’ Stoker (1847–1912) is the personal assistant to famous actor Sir Henry Irving and business manager of the Lyceum Theatre, which Irving owns. Thanks to his theatrical connections he moves freely in high society, but while he has published a few stories, he will become truly famous for writing *Dracula* when it is published in 1897.

Sir Francis Varney is a vampire whose career seems to have begun in the early eighteenth century and continued at least until the middle of the nineteenth. He mostly haunts the Bannerworth family, a once-wealthy house which he may have belonged to. He has not been seen since 1847, when he threw himself into Mount Vesuvius in an apparent suicide, but he has been known to come back from apparent destruction before.

Doctor John Watson, Holmes’s room-mate and chronicler, is a worthwhile acquaintance in his own right, and not just because he offers the player characters access to Holmes. A former medical officer with the British Army, he is calm under pressure, reasonably skilled with his revolver and in close combat, and used to treating combat injuries. Also, he knows almost everyone whom Holmes knows, but is far less likely to have antagonized them in the past.

Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) is a famous writer and playwright, known for witty comedies such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* and for quips such as ‘There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about’ and ‘I can resist anything except temptation’. A flamboyant dresser, he is known for his role in the decadent and aesthetic artistic movements (see box, page 127), and his friendships with beautiful young men – in particular Lord Alfred Douglas, the son of the Marquess of Queensberry – lead to his trial and imprisonment in 1895.

W.B. Yeats (1865–1939) is an Irish poet dedicated to collecting and preserving the folklore and traditions of Ireland. An early member of the Ghost Club, Yeats has a lifelong interest in the supernatural and joined the Golden Dawn in 1890.

SOCIETIES AND GROUPS

In London and elsewhere the player characters might encounter a number of groups whose aims and interests overlap with those of the Society. Here are summaries of some of these: as with the celebrity NPCs above, the Gamemaster can find plenty of information online that will help develop any of these groups for use in a mystery.

The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge (known to all simply as the Royal Society) was founded in 1660. It is best known for awarding fellowships to the most distinguished scientists of their times, and over the centuries these have included Isaac Newton (1672), Charles Darwin (1839), and Michael Faraday (1824). The distinction FRS (Fellow of the Royal Society) after a person's name marks them as a scientist of considerable repute. Historically it did not concern itself with the supernatural, but in Mythic Britain and Ireland things might be different. Perhaps a few members with the Sight are trying to legitimize the scientific study of such matters.

The Freemasons in England go back at least as far as 1717 and claim to be descended from the masons who built Solomon's Temple. Their initiations are shrouded in secrecy and ritual, and some claim that they are the guardians of magical secrets, perhaps also inherited from King Solomon. Lodges are opening across Mythic Britain and Ireland as businessmen and community leaders find membership a useful source of mutual support and advancement, but the question of whether their leaders have occult powers or secret knowledge is for the Gamemaster to decide.

The Ghost Club is said to be the oldest organization in the world devoted to the study of hauntings and other supernatural phenomena. Its members include Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle. In the course of its investigations, the Club has debunked a number of fraudulent spirit mediums by exposing

their methods, but its membership still believes in the reality of supernatural beings and effects. It has no headquarters, but its members hire rooms at London restaurants for their meetings.

The British National Spiritualist Alliance was founded in Liverpool in 1874 and its headquarters moved to London in 1875. It has over 400 members, and its research is aimed chiefly at the study of mediums and ghostly materializations. In the course of its research, the Alliance has exposed a number of fraudulent mediums, and its members continue to work towards an understanding of mediumship and how it works.

The Society for Psychical Research is newer than the Ghost Club, and its membership consists of skeptics as well as believers. Its headquarters are in a house in the wealthy South Kensington area of London, and its members have access to Cambridge University Library. Several books on hauntings and other supernatural phenomena have been published under its auspices.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is a secret society devoted to the study of the occult with a focus on practical magic. It was founded in 1887 and dissolved in 1903, and its whole history is rent by schisms as members fell out with one another and left to form their own groups. Originally its structure and rituals were inspired by Freemasonry, although unlike many organizations of its day women are admitted in an equal footing with men.





MYSTERIOUS PLACES

Mythic Britain and Ireland is full of ancient barrow mounds, standing stones, and other mysterious remains. Academics claim that they were built by prehistoric peoples, but many of them have links to the fairies and other supernatural beings. Here are some of the more famous examples:

WAYLAND'S SMITHY, ENGLAND

This long barrow in Oxfordshire is where the magical master smith Wayland had his forge in ancient times. His spirit is still active there, and will re-shoe a horse overnight in exchange for a silver coin left on the mound's capstone.

THE CERNE ABBAS GIANT, ENGLAND

This huge figure is cut into a hillside in Dorset. While there are a lot of local folk-beliefs associated with it, few people know that it marks the outline of an actual giant, who was defeated on that spot centuries ago and is buried beneath it.

HERNE THE HUNTER, ENGLAND

Windsor Forest in Berkshire has been a royal hunting-park since the Norman conquest of England in the 11th century. Herne is said to be the ghost of a royal huntsman who hanged himself on a huge and ancient oak that is now known as Herne's Oak, although some think he is a more ancient forest spirit, similar to an ash tree wife or a wood wife (*Vaesen*, pages 124 and 164 respectively). He rides through the forest with a pack of ghostly hounds, and can be seen on moonlit nights, with antlers on his head. Sometimes he leaves a hunting-horn near the oak, and if anyone is rash enough to blow on it they are hunted down and killed, although there is never a mark on their body.

THE WITCH OF WOOKEY, ENGLAND

Wookey Hole cave, near Wells in Somerset, was once the lair of an evil witch who terrorized the area, cursing lovers so that they would never be together. One of her victims, who had become a monk at Glastonbury Abbey after she cursed him and his sweetheart, stalked her through the cave, splashing holy water into every corner until he found her. The holy water turned her to stone, and she can still be seen in the form of a stalagmite. That, at least, is the story – but who is to say that the holy water was entirely effective, or that its effects will be permanent?

SHAG BROOK, ENGLAND

This spot, near Buckland in Surrey, is haunted by a monstrous horse called the Buckland Shag. It drags travelers from the nearby coach road to a rock in mid-stream named the Shag Stone, where it devours them.

LOCH NESS, SCOTLAND

This long, deep lake in Scotland is inhabited by a great serpent that was first reported in the 6th century, when it attacked a man and tried to drag him into the lake. Hearing of this, Saint Columba told one of his followers to swim across the lake. When the serpent attacked, Columba made the sign of the cross and ordered the beast to leave the man alone. The monster fled, and has not been known to attack anyone since that day, though sightings of the beast continue.

LOCH LANGVAT, SCOTLAND

An island in this lake, on the Scottish isle of Lewis, was once inhabited by a clan of werewolves. They died out long ago and are buried on the island, but local legend maintains that they will rise to take revenge if their graves are disturbed.

THE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY, IRELAND

The Irish giant Finn McCool was in a dispute with a Scottish giant, and tore up chunks of the Antrim coast to build a causeway so he could cross the water to reach him. The hexagonal columns of rock can be seen to this day. Some say Finn is dead, but one can never be sure with giants. Others believe he is asleep in a cave, and will waken when a magical hunting horn called the Dord Fiann is sounded three times.

LOUGH GUR, COUNTY LIMERICK, IRELAND

Lough Gur is a lake in the shape of a dragon's maw. The legends say that this place was once the home of the goddess Áine of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and that her city still lives at the bottom of the lake. Locals claim that if you take a boat out on the lake on the stillest of nights, you can peer down through the gloomy water to see the glimmer of the city's lights, and hear the muffled tones of beautiful singing. Some even claim to have been dragged down to the city. It is said that the sidhe here were the last to fall to the spread of Christianity, and that men of God feel unwelcome or even fall ill.

KILLARY HARBOUR, CONNEMARA, IRELAND

Killary Harbour sits at the end of a deep fjord on the west coast of Ireland. The Killary Harbour Ragtree is a hawthorn tree that is beloved of the sidhe, and local people tie colored rags and other little offerings to its branches in the hope of good fortune or to save a relative from sickness. Local folklore in two nearby villages, Rosroe and Leenaun, swears that this works, for the sidhe are real: for proof, they point to the deserted hamlets of Foher and Uggool, whose people turned from the sidhe and the Ragtree during the Great Famine of 1845–51 and paid for their arrogance with their lives.

DINAS EMRYS, WALES

Beneath this mountain in Wales is the home of a great red dragon. It was last seen in ancient times, when the great wizard Merlin saw it drive off the white dragon of the invading Saxons. Since then, it has slumbered beneath its mountain. It did not stir when England conquered Wales in the Middle Ages, but perhaps it may yet be woken to drive the English out and give Wales back her freedom.

CADAIR IDRIS, SNOWDONIA, WALES

"The Chair of Idris" high in the Snowdonia mountains, is a rock formation in the shape of an enormous throne. It is reputed to have been made by the giant Idris, who would sit there and contemplate the heavens, watching the moon wax and wane and learning to predict the future through the movement of celestial bodies. Legend warns that anyone who sleeps here will wake up either a madman or a poet, and none has been brave or foolish enough to try for a very long time.

BEDDGELERT, SNOWDONIA, WALES

In the 13th century Llewellyn the Great left his faithful hound, Gelert, to watch over his baby son as he went to hunt. On return the child was missing and Gelert was covered in blood. Llewellyn struck down the hound, thinking Gelert had killed the baby, only to find the child safe and the mauled body of a wolf nearby: Gelert had saved the child! Wracked with sorrowful grief for his brave dog, Llewellyn buried him in high honor within a magnificent tomb. He named the nearby town in his dog's honor – Beddgelert, "Gelert's Grave." Legend has it that Gelert's spirit still resides in his tomb and the loyal hound can be called upon to help in times of trouble.

PARALLEL WORLDS

The folk traditions of Mythic Britain and Ireland tell of several realms, adjacent to the world of mortals but separate from it, into which mortals can stray or be lured by their supernatural neighbors. The fey realm may be entered from certain points in the mortal world, and while it looks similar – so similar, in fact, that some mortals may be completely unaware that they have entered it – there are a number of significant differences.

Time often moves at a different rate from the mortal world, and mortals who eat the food served there may be trapped in the fairy realm, or at least suffer some kind of sickness for the rest of their days.

ANNWYN

Annwyn (also known as Annwn) is the fey underworld of Welsh folklore, mentioned both in Arthurian sources and in the Welsh mythological epic, *The Mabinogion*. *Plant annwn* (“the children of Annwn”) is a common Welsh name for fairies.

In the best-known story of Annwyn, Pwyll, the king of Dyfed, meets Arawn, a king from Annwyn, after becoming separated from his retainers while hunting in the forest. The two change places for a year and a day, magically disguised as each other. Pwyll defeats a rival king, which Arawn had been unable to do, and makes Arawn the king of all Annwyn. Thereafter, Pwyll and Arawn each return to their proper realms, and Pwyll’s reign in Dyfed is long and prosperous.

Annwyn is described as being much like the mortal world at the time, but richer and more magnificent. Arawn’s court is “the finest assembly of buildings,” his soldiers are “the finest looking and best-equipped troops,” and his queen is “the most beautiful woman.” Unlike many other fey realms, time in Annwyn passes at the same rate as in the mortal world.

TÍR NA NÓG

Tír Na nÓg means “the land of the young” in Irish, and no one there ever ages. It is said to lie to the west of Ireland and is a land of great beauty and abundance. The fey race of the Tuatha Dé Danann withdrew from Ireland to Tír Na nÓg after being displaced by the mortal Sons of Mil, from whom all mortal Irish folk are descended.

Mortals are occasionally invited to Tír Na nÓg – the best known is Oisín, a renowned singer and poet. They can return to the mortal realm, but Oisín was warned not to set foot on mortal ground again, for time passes more slowly in Tír Na nÓg. When he fell off his horse, he aged 300 years in an instant.

SIDHE

Spelled *sidhe* in Irish and *sith* in Scots Gaelic (but always pronounced *shee*), this word describes both the otherworld and its fey inhabitants. The term is also applied to fairy mounds (see page 36).

Like Tír Na nÓg (see above), the realm of Sidhe is a place of great beauty and richness, with continual feasting and revelry. Unlike Tír Na nÓg, though, it is not a single, far-off land, but a composite of many locations, most of them accessible from the mortal world.

WALKING BETWEEN WORLDS

The fey realms are generally entered in one of three ways: by accident, by being taken (or led) there, or by discovering hidden entrances. Entrances to Sidhe from the mortal world can be found through natural locations such as lakes or caves, and beneath fairy mounds. Mortals can also enter Sidhe by getting lost in a forest, especially if they have been misled by fairies or other supernatural tricksters. Sometimes people simply wander from one realm to the other without knowing it, as Pwyll of Dyfed apparently did. Sometimes they fall asleep beneath the roots of a huge and ancient tree, in a hollow in a hillside, or some other location, and wake up in the other world.

Characters who possess the Sight can see the paths and doorways between worlds, and so can supernatural beings, but ordinary mortals cannot, and move between worlds accidentally, or by being kidnapped or tricked.

Leaving the fey realms is usually much more difficult than entering them. In some cases, mortals simply cannot leave: the doors leading back to the mortal world are solid walls to those without the Sight, and cannot be opened until their hosts are ready to allow them to leave. However, those who do return to the mortal world often bring back some supernatural gift, such as the Sight or a supernatural healing ability.

A DREAM JOURNEY

In the 17th century, an English serving maid named Anne Jefferies suffered a fit, and was ill for some time. After she regained consciousness, she said that she had been taken by the fairies. For the rest of her life she had the power of clairvoyance and the ability to heal by touch, and she said that the fairies visited her and brought her food.



FEY FOOD

Many traditions tell that it is fatal to accept any offer of food or drink in a fey realm. Eating or drinking anything binds the visitor to the supernatural realm and they may forget their mortal existence or die as soon as they return.

FEY PLACES

Supernatural creatures exist not only in magical parallel worlds. They are also associated with certain special places in the world of mortals, where openings from one world to another may be found.

BURIAL MOUNDS

Burial mounds and other prehistoric monuments often have legends attached to them, linking them with fairies and other vaesen. In Britain and Ireland, as elsewhere in Europe, mortals have been exploring these mounds since time immemorial. Some left evidence of their presence, like the Vikings who carved runic graffiti inside the Neolithic chambered tombs of Scotland, while others simply took whatever they found valuable and left.

Burial mounds are also one of the places – though by no means the only places – where flint arrowheads can be found, the type that many traditions associate with elf-shot. According to folklore, certain burial mounds are fairy dwellings, which makes them objects of both fear and fascination. They may contain treasure, but the fairies are sure to punish any mortal who dares to rob them. On certain nights, the tops of fairy mounds were raised up on pillars – usually red was the fashionable color – revealing the feasting and revels within. In other places, the mounds are entered through great doors in their sides, which can only be seen by those with the Sight, or by the light of the full moon during a certain month, or under some other specific conditions.

Other mounds are occupied by the dead, who may rise as revenants to punish trespassers and recover stolen property. Sometimes the interiors are just as a burrowing antiquarian would find them in daylight,

and sometimes, especially if entered by magical means, they contain a warrior's hall complete with furniture and staff, that looks and operates exactly as the dead occupant's home did in life. Both fairy mounds and burial mounds can be considerably larger on the inside than they are on the outside.

Trespassing in a fairy mound is a risky business. An interloper may find themselves thrown out by an invisible force, usually bruised and with their clothes torn and sometimes struck blind or mad into the bargain. Perhaps a worse fate, though, awaits those who are welcomed as honored guests, for they must be careful not to eat or drink anything while inside the mound or they will be trapped there forever, either joining the fairy host or becoming an offering in the *Teind* (see also *The Wild Hunt*, page 38). Those who avoid all of these hazards are not safe, though, for time passes at a different rate here than in the outside world. More than one story tells of someone who spends an evening in a fairy mound, only to find that decades or even centuries have passed in the outside world. As soon as they set foot on mortal ground, they age instantly and may die. Some have evaded this fate by staying on horseback, or using some other means to ensure that their feet do not touch the ground.

A few, rare individuals have been guests of the fairies and lived to tell the tale. Those who have amused the fairies or bested them in some task or wager may be rewarded (see *Challenges, Favors, and Forfeits* on page 53). They often take a shine to musicians and poets, granting them supernatural levels of skill as a reward for a successful performance. Sometimes a musician is taught a fairy tune that compels all who hear it to dance, like the playing of the Neck (*Vaesen* core book, page 144).

FAERIE GLADES

There are some places in forests and woodlands that, to the imaginative mind, are somehow different from their surroundings – something in the way the trees grow, a sheltered position meaning that the dew never leaves the grass, or a patch of more fertile



They dance in Moon-Light when Mortals
are asleep... their dancing-Places being
very distinguishable; For as they dance
Hand in Hand, and so make a Circle in
their Dance, so next Day there will be seen
Rings and Circles upon the Grass.

– JOHN BRAND, *OBSERVATIONS ON
POPULAR ANTIQUITIES*, 1777

soil causing wildflowers to grow in greater profusion than elsewhere.

Like burial mounds, these glades can contain hidden or invisible doors, in a bank or between the roots of a huge tree, for example, through which the parallel world can be entered. Sometimes the invisible doorway is so wide that, like Pwyll of Dyfed (see page 35), a person can cross into the otherworld without knowing.

FAIRY RINGS AND STONE CIRCLES

Fairy dancing-grounds can be identified by circular patterns in the ground. These may take the form of mushroom rings or rings where the grass is worn down from dancing. They have also been known to dance around ancient stone circles.

If a mortal chances upon a fairy dance – which always takes place at night, and usually on a Wednesday – they risk being dragged into the dance. They must resist the effects of the Trollcraft spell **DANCE** (*Vaesen*, page 120) or be unable to stop until they drop from exhaustion or even die. Of the few

who survive until dawn, some are taken off to the fairy realms while others are released after being given some magical power, such as the Sight or the power of prophecy.

A mortal can be rescued from a fairy ring by breaking the circle with a rowan stick or a piece of iron, and it is possible, though risky, to reach across the ring without setting foot inside and pull the victim out. It is advisable to have some means of protection from the fairies, as they are never happy to be thwarted. Even if a potential victim is rescued successfully, they may never recover from the experience. They often spend the rest of their lives in a deep depression, pining for the world of the fairies.

FAIRY PATHS

Fairy paths are invisible to those without the Sight. When seen, they are trodden down and worn just like a path made by mortals. If mortals should chance to build across a fairy path, the building may never be finished, for each night the fairies will undo the previous day's work. They may even attack the builders with elf-shot (missiles in the form of stone arrowheads, that lame their victims or cause strokes) or curses.

Before starting to build, it is advisable to put up posts marking the building's outline and leave them overnight. If they are still standing the next day, it is safe to build.

If they are unable to prevent a building from being completed, the fairies do not alter their route. They pass through during the night, causing disturbances as they go, and the front and back doors can never be kept closed.

The fairies do not like mortals using their paths, and if a mortal should chance to meet a group of fairies on a fairy path, especially at night, they can find themselves in great danger, whether they are aware of the fairies or not. It is especially important to avoid fairy paths on the quarter days – the solstices and the equinoxes – because the fairies travel along the paths in great numbers as they move their homes from one hill to another.

THE WILD HUNT

The first thing to say about the wild hunt is that there is more than one. Supernatural hunts have been reported from Scandinavia through France and Germany to Britain and Ireland. According to reports from the United States, the hunters have followed European settlers to North America too. Depending on the location of a mystery and the needs of the plot, the Wild Hunt can be encountered in many different forms.

The identity of the hunt's leader, the nature of the hunters, and the quarry they are hunting all vary from time to time and place to place, as does the name of the hunt itself. In the Mythic North it is often Odin, leading a host of the dead and sometimes some trolls in pursuit of mortals – sometimes as a punishment, but just as often for sport. In the south of England the hunt is often led by Herne the Hunter, a mythical figure who some equate with the ancient horned god Cernunnos, followed by a host of human-sized fairies with some lesser ancient gods mixed in. In other parts of Britain and Ireland the hunt consists of fairies and they are led by a fairy king or queen such as the legendary Oberon and Titania or some other fairy ruler such as Gwyn ap Nudd in Wales or a member of the Tuatha Dé Danann in Ireland. Other hunts have been led by historical figures such as the Elizabethan hero Sir Francis Drake or a local lord who neglected Sunday church. In a few cases, the hunt is led by the Devil himself.

The hunt's horses and hounds are usually black, often with red, glowing eyes, and sometimes with flaming breath. However, they can also be white or gray. In Wales, the hounds are *cwn annwn* ("otherworld hounds"), which are white with red ears and tails. Sometimes, the horses and hounds are headless. In most cases, the hunt and its hounds can move over any kind of terrain without being slowed, and sometimes those involved can even fly. The hounds never lose the scent of their quarry, and the sound of their baying carries for miles.

Some wild hunts merely cross the sky in pursuit of some unknown quarry, often accompanied by a

storm. A few pursue mythological beasts, and a few chase the spirits of the dead to add them to the ranks of the hunters. According to Christian sources, some hunt humans to pay the *Teind*, an annual tribute of souls that the fey owe to the Devil. Other tales tell of the hunters cornering a victim and offering them a choice: join the hunt, leaving everything mortal behind, or be torn apart by the hounds. When a wild hunt consists of the dead, it is not uncommon for

the living to recognize some of the riders as they pass by. Stories of abduction often feature attempts by the abductee's friends and relatives to free them from the thrall of the fairies, as in the Scottish tale of Tam Lin where his true love pulled him from his horse and held onto him as his captors turned him into a succession of forms including a snake, a lion, and a burning coal.

While it is impossible to give a single, definitive description for the wild hunt in terms of game rules and statistics, a Gamemaster has the freedom to design a supernatural hunt for themselves, making it fit the needs of the mystery and the style of the campaign.





It was toward the end of my second year in Cambridge, immediately after the incident in the buttery of King's College, that I was first made aware of the Society. I held my tongue as the college authorities threatened to send me down and charge my family for the damages and loss of foodstuffs, for it was certain that no one would ever believe what I had seen, and that explaining the truth would only result in further charges of dishonesty or even my being committed to an institution. I would not have believed the tale for a moment, had I heard it from someone else.

Since the evidence of my eyes and ears was clearly false, I tried to explain the matter to myself in other ways. Had I been drugged, perhaps, or sleepwalking, and dreamed the small and merry creatures out of some memory of a childhood story? But then a fellow undergraduate named Pelham sought me out.

I barely knew the man, and we had no reason to be friends. At first I thought he was mocking me by pretending sympathy, and I was about to send him on his way 'with a flea in his ear' as the saying goes, but he described the creatures exactly, and said he had encountered similar pests in the cellar of his uncle's house in Ireland. There was someone he wanted me to meet, from a Society of people who had had similar experiences.

My life changed that week. The Society somehow saw to it that my place at the university was saved, and the damages were no longer laid to my account. As for me, my eyes were opened to a whole new world.



THE SOCIETY

THIS CHAPTER PROVIDES an outline of the Society's history in Mythic Britain and Ireland, and how it survived the troubles that afflicted its counterparts in Scandinavia. It continues with a description of the Society's recruitment policies and practices, and ends with a description of its headquarters at Rose House in London.

THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY

John Dee was a scientific and astrological advisor to Queen Elizabeth I of England and a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. While in London he met with

the adventurer and courtier Sir Walter Raleigh, who introduced him to the Queen's spymaster, Sir Francis Walsingham. As the kingdom's guardian against threats ordinary and extraordinary, Walsingham was concerned about England's witches and other supernatural denizens, especially in the light of a recent attempt by Scottish witches to assassinate King James VI (later King James I of England) by raising a storm to sink his ship.

Dee introduced the two to a fellow Cambridge academic named Edmund Spenser, who had been making a study of faerie lore in preparation for a book. Walsingham forbade Spenser to publish what he knew, fearing what might happen if such knowledge became public, but in the year of Walsingham's death Spenser published *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser was expelled from the Society, and its other members worked hard to

influence public opinion so that the book was seen as allegorical, and a simple attempt to curry favor with Elizabeth. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presented fairies as harmless figures of fun, while Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* implied that they did not exist by having a trio of charlatans trick a victim out of his fortune through the promise of fairy gold.

Dee is credited with suggesting the name The Apollonian Society, a reference to the famed Greek philosopher Apollonius of Tyana, who is said to have possessed second sight and to have saved one of his students from a vampire-like creature called an *empousa*.

Upon Walsingham's death in 1590, the group was officially dissolved, but its members carried on their researches and established bases in Cambridge and Oxford as well as in London. Their original meetings took place in the Deptford home of Eleanor Bull, which was used as a safe house for Walsingham's agents; after the murder there of playwright and spy Christopher Marlowe in 1593, the group alternated between the London homes of Dee and Raleigh before Thomas Walsingham, a cousin of the founder, offered them the use of Rose House, near London Wall.

The antiquarian John Aubrey joined the group in 1650. A survey of folk sources across England had backed up reports from Scotland and Ireland that fairies and other supernatural creatures were commonly associated with barrow mounds, stone circles, and other ancient monuments, and this was a subject Aubrey knew well. As time went on, experts in other fields were carefully approached and the Society's resources grew.

The Apollonian Society made contact with the Order of Artemis through Christer Bonde, who was Swedish ambassador from 1656 to 1657. Bonde had studied at universities across Europe, including Oxford where he first became aware of the Society. He became a member of the Order of Artemis after an encounter with landvaettir during his time as an assessor in the mountains of Sweden, and used his later posting to London to build contacts between the two organizations. When Carl Linnaeus visited London in 1736, Sir Hannes Sloane had succeeded Sir Isaac Newton as head

THE BERWICK WITCHES

In 1590, King James VI of Scotland traveled to Denmark to fetch his bride, the Princess Anne. Their return journey was threatened by terrible storms, caused by a conspiracy of over 100 witches. The case was described in a 1591 pamphlet titled *Newes from Scotland*, which was republished as an appendix to the king's 1597 book *Daemonologie*.

of the Apollonian Society, and the two spent a great deal of time together. Ostensibly, Linnaeus was examining Sloane's collection of antiquities and curiosities, which would go on to become the foundation of the British Museum, but in fact the two were comparing notes on supernatural phenomena and discussing closer cooperation between their two societies.

In the years since the Oulu massacre (page 82 of the core rulebook), the Society has worked to rebuild ties with remnants in Scandinavia and assist with efforts to rebuild as much as it can.

WILLIAM STUKELEY

William Stukeley was born in the town of Holbeach in Lincolnshire in 1687. The son of a lawyer, he studied medicine in London and from 1710 until 1725 he devoted part of each year to traveling around the countryside examining ancient monuments. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and became the first secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

Stukeley published some of the earliest accounts of Britain's ancient monuments, and is regarded as one of the fathers of British archaeology. He also became interested in Druidism, and later scholars have criticized his "fantastical" views and tendency toward mysticism. Some contemporaries held similar views, and this may explain his decision to leave London in 1726 and return to his native Lincolnshire. He was ordained in the Church of England, and spent much of the rest



of his life turning his antiquarian and scientific knowledge to the service of the Church, arguing against the nonconformism that was on the rise at that time.

That is the public face of Stukeley's life; the archives of the Society contain his voluminous correspondence with scholars across Europe, as well as a number of unpublished accounts of his encounters with supernatural creatures on his travels. His writings make it clear that he obtained accounts of ancient monuments and druidic traditions from these sources, allegedly first-hand but not always truthful. A careful reader can see evidence of the toll that Stukeley's encounters with magical beings took on his nerves, and at least some in the Society believe that he embraced the Church as a means of protecting himself against some supernatural danger that he feared might befall him.

With the permission of the Society's London archivist, short passages from Stukeley's notes are reproduced in a later chapter, introducing each type of creature considered in this book.

THE SOCIETY AND THE WORLD

Members of the Order of Artemis from Scandinavia and elsewhere are sure of a welcome from the Apollonian Society. Some regard the two societies as effectively merged, with only the names remaining different. Certainly, the Order of Artemis has received a great deal of aid from the Society in its efforts to rebuild after the Oulu massacre. Members of one group are generally treated as members of both.

The Society maintains a constant correspondence with organizations across the world whose interests align with its own, both as the Society itself and through the personal relationships of individual members. Anyone who is a member of a friendly organization, or who brings letters of introduction from a member or correspondent of the Society, can count on a favorable reception, at least in the first instance. After that, their standing with the Society depends on their behavior.

POLICIES AND OPERATIONS

The Society's members do not strive to hide their membership, but do not openly advertise it either. In an increasingly materialistic age, to do so would invite ridicule that might hinder their business and other interests.

They continue to investigate supernatural threats and unexplained events, just as they have for centuries. Potential new members are vetted very carefully, and not everyone who possesses the Sight is deemed suitable for membership. With the growth of spiritualism and the increased interest in the supernatural that has taken place over recent decades, the Society must not only be wary of charlatans and journalists, but also of those romantic souls who could endanger others by failing to take sufficient care in dealing with the supernatural. Intelligence, discretion, and calmness under pressure are as important as the Sight itself.

When a potential new member has been identified, a member is appointed to study their experiences with the supernatural and the way in which they conducted themselves throughout. Those found wanting are never allowed to hear of the Society's existence, and in some cases steps are taken to convince them that there is a perfectly mundane explanation for whatever they witnessed and to discourage them from investigating the supernatural further. Those who are deemed worthy to join the Society are approached discreetly and undergo a series of interviews, after which, if all goes well, they are inducted as members.

ROSE HOUSE

Rose House is a stone building of three stories at Aldermanbury, not far from London Wall. It is said that it takes its name from the secret, or *sub rosa*, business conducted by Sir Francis Walsingham, whose family once owned the house.

The present structure was built between 1666 and 1668 after its predecessor burned down in the Great Fire of 1666. Its interior has changed over the centuries, giving it a somewhat unconventional layout.

About half the ground level is occupied by a coach house and stables, which are entered from the street through an arched double gate. The rest of the floor consists of kitchens and store rooms, with a small cellar for wine and perishables. Hawkins the butler has an office and small bedroom off the store rooms. Mrs. Morley the cook-housekeeper comes in daily from her home a few streets away.

Stairs lead up to the first floor, where the main activity of the house takes place. The staircase leads to a central lounge furnished with sofas and armchairs, and doors lead to the library and museum on one side and the dining room on the other. The top floor is devoted to bedrooms, which are made available to visiting members.

HAWKINS

Hawkins has been the butler at Rose House for as long as any living member can remember, and he does not seem to age. He runs the house with seemingly effortless efficiency, in addition to maintaining the library and museum.

HEADQUARTERS

Rose House has all the functions of a headquarters, as set down in chapter 6 of the *Vaesen* core rulebook (*'Campaign Rules'*). Its rooms include the following facilities:

- ◆ A small armory resides in a side-room off the library. The furniture in the lounge can be pushed back to allow room for practicing. Hawkins does not allow firearms to be discharged indoors, but there is a clear space of about 20 yards (20 m) in the cellars where a straw target can be set up for shooting practice.
- ◆ Rose House lacks a formal infirmary, but Hawkins keeps the house stocked with basic medical supplies and can turn any of the guest bedrooms into a sick room or makeshift hospital ward in a matter of minutes.

- ◆ The library, as has been mentioned, includes a small museum of objects from previous investigations. It also has a selection of maps, principally covering Britain, Ireland, and the Empire, as well as a collection of current rail and ferry timetables.
- ◆ Other rooms can be added as the Gamemaster wishes, based on the *"Facilities"* section of the *Vaesen* core rulebook (pages 89–92).

WHO IS HAWKINS?

Hawkins is a mysterious character, and as the Gamemaster you can decide who – and indeed, what – he is in your campaign. Here are a few suggestions, but you should feel free to come up with your own ideas, or to leave him mysterious until the course of your adventures suggests ideas to you.

- ◆ He is an ordinary mortal of unusual health and vigor, who appears much younger than his age but is not supernatural in any way.
- ◆ He is the ghost of a former Society member who has somehow gained the ability to appear solid and alive. However, he is bound within the four walls of the house, and cannot leave.
- ◆ He is a spirit conjured and bound by John Dee at the Society's founding. He is bound to the house in the same way as a church grim is bound to its church, and will defend it against attackers (in fact, it was he who kept the library intact as the house burned down around it during the Great Fire of 1666), and regards all Society members as friends, as long as they behave themselves.
- ◆ He is a former servant of Sir Francis Walsingham, who gained the gift of immortality during one of the Society's early exploits.
- ◆ He is a Society member who once visited a fairy stronghold and has become temporally unstable as a result. So long as he remains in the house, the effects of several fairy objects in the museum combine with his altered nature to ensure that he will never age or die, but if they should be removed, or if he should set foot outside, he will age three hundred years in a matter of seconds.

The fact that impressed itself most immediately upon my mind was that the supernatural is no respecter of persons. Within the Society I encountered people from every conceivable background and station in life, every nation and region, and possessing every possible set of abilities and skills. United only by their common experience — or should I say uncommon? — the Society's members were a remarkably democratic group, placing almost no value on class or profession but valuing each member according to the resources and abilities they brought to our shared endeavour. I have read of similar bonds reaching across ranks to unite troops on campaign, but in experiencing them myself I began to look at conventional social mores with a somewhat jaded eye.



NEW ARCHETYPES

The *Vaesen* core rulebook includes a number of character archetypes, all of which can be used in Mythic Britain and Ireland just as freely as in the Mythic North. The following pages present a selection of others, inspired by this setting but just as usable elsewhere.

All are presented in the same format as the archetypes in the core rulebook. British names have been supplied, but are easily replaced with suitable names from Scandinavia, or anywhere else a particular campaign might be set. For campaigns taking place outside Mythic Britain and Ireland, the Gamemaster should feel free to make any other adjustments that will help adapt these archetypes to their setting.

SPORTS

The following sports were popular in Britain and Ireland during the 19th century.

SPORT	MAIN SKILL	TALENT
Athletics	AGILITY	Sprinter
Boxing	FORCE	Pugilist
Cricket	AGILITY	Gentleman
Fencing	CLOSE COMBAT	Combat-Trained
Rugby	FORCE	Fleet-footed
Tennis	AGILITY	Defensive
Wrestling	FORCE	Combat-Trained

ATHLETE

At this level of competition, one gets used to challenges from strangers. Everyone believes that they could be a champion but for some mischance or want of good fortune, and they leap at a chance to prove themselves, or to take a champion down a peg or two. I'll admit the terms of the wager seemed oddly worded, but one look at my scrawny challenger made me confident that I could not lose. Therefore, I paid no mind to the penalty for defeat, and that, as I soon discovered, was a terrible mistake.



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

NAME

- ♦ FIRST NAME: Eleanor, Florence, Jack, Maureen, Sidney, William
- ♦ LAST NAME: Boland, Grace, Robertson

MOTIVATION

- ♦ Increase one's own abilities
- ♦ Avenge a past defeat
- ♦ Find out who is natural and who is not

TRAUMA

- ♦ Lost a fairy bet
- ♦ Cursed by a game-fixing witch
- ♦ Searching for a missing team-mate

DARK SECRET

- ♦ Drug addicted
- ♦ Cheats
 - ♦ Will fix games for money

RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ♦ Good enough company
- ♦ A potential rival
- ♦ Doesn't like sport, therefore uninteresting

- ♦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Physique
- ♦ **MAIN SKILL:** One Physique skill, depending on chosen sport (see text box on previous page)
- ♦ **TALENTS:** Famous, Robust, one other depending on chosen sport (see text box on previous page)
- ♦ **RESOURCES:** 2–4
- ♦ **EQUIPMENT:** Athletic apparel and equipment for sport of choice

ENTERTAINER

I've been all over the country and played in all kinds of houses, from the big stages in the West End to the smallest halls in the grubbiest towns. In all that time, I never heard of a theatre that didn't have a ghost or something similar. It's just not a proper theatre without one, everyone agrees. We learn that there are rules, things to do and not do if you don't want disaster coming down on your head. But that show was cursed, I'm telling you. One mention of fai — of the other folk on stage, and everything fell apart. Lights going on and off by themselves, curtains falling — actors falling, too, and it's a miracle no one was killed.



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

NAME

- ♦ FIRST NAME: Ada, Annie, Fred, Leo, Marie, Walter
- ♦ LAST NAME: King, Leyton, Williams

MOTIVATION

- ♦ Find out the truth behind superstitions
- ♦ Cleanse a favorite theatre
- ♦ Make sure the show can always go on

TRAUMA

- ♦ Injured by angry spirit
- ♦ Saw friends killed by supernatural beings
- ♦ Searching for an abducted friend or relative

DARK SECRET

- ♦ Alcoholic
- ♦ On the run
- ♦ Made a devil's bargain for success

RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ♦ A complete bore
- ♦ A potential lover
- ♦ I feel you judging me

- ♦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Empathy
- ♦ **MAIN SKILL:** Manipulation
- ♦ **TALENTS:** Famous, Performer (see below), Well-Traveled
- ♦ **RESOURCES:** 2–4
- ♦ **EQUIPMENT:** Costumes, make-up, scripts

PERFORMER (GENERAL TALENT)

Ignore Conditions when making **INSPIRATION** or **MANIPULATION** tests.

SOCIALITE

It all began at Charlie Mac's Hogmanay party at Dunoon Castle. Frightful place, really — so cold, and gray, and draughty — but there were fires in every room and there was plenty of food and drink to keep us tolerably warm. Anyway, as midnight drew near, Percy Lambourne suggested a ghost story contest. He said it was a tradition of the season, but we all knew he just wanted to put a good scare into Dolly Figworth so she'd snuggle closer to him. Charlie was against the idea, though he wouldn't say why, and as Percy began his tale, he left the room. It turned out that Dunoon's resident ghost was equally disapproving. Dolly has been in Nice for her nerves ever since, and poor Percy... well, I hardly like to say.



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

NAME

- ♦ FIRST NAME: Alfred, Alice, Edward, Helena, Louise, Percival
- ♦ LAST NAME: Cholmondely ("Chumley"), Fitzroy, Villiers

MOTIVATION

- ♦ Removing threats to estate and tenants
- ♦ Collecting stories to tell
- ♦ Proving one's quality

TRAUMA

- ♦ Attacked by castle ghost
- ♦ Tenants or relatives abducted by fairies
- ♦ Driven from ancestral home by redcaps

DARK SECRET

- ♦ Born from an affair
- ♦ Secretly impoverished
- ♦ Accidentally killed someone

RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ♦ An amusing companion
- ♦ Useful, but not a suitable friend
- ♦ A good friend

- ♦ MAIN ATTRIBUTE: Empathy
- ♦ MAIN SKILL: Inspiration
- ♦ TALENTS: Famous, Gentleman, Wealthy
- ♦ RESOURCES: 4–7
- ♦ EQUIPMENT: London apartment, country estate, revolver



Despite the things I had already witnessed and experienced, I freely confess that the reports I read in the archives of the Society strained my credulity. Here was almost every nursery bogey and cautionary bugaboo that any children's book ever named, or so it seemed — and I was to understand that each and every one of them was as real as gas lighting, steam engines, and the telegraph?

My skepticism was not unexpected, and my fellow members — equally strange, to have colleagues in whom to confide on these matters — were quick to assure me that these discoveries had struck each of them with just the same amazement, when they were as new to the Society as I was that day. As each of them recounted his or her own experiences with the uncanny, I came to see that I was not alone — and, slightly pricking my vanity, that I was not unique either.

Slowly, I came to grips with the realization that there was a whole side of the world of which the modern, scientific world had lost sight. The more I heard and read, the more aware I became of how much more I did not know, and the resolution grew in me to learn all I could, for in knowledge lay the only true defence.



SUPERNATURAL CREATURES

THIS CHAPTER PRESENTS a selection of supernatural creatures from Mythic Britain and Ireland, as well as some notes on the local counterparts of the Scandinavian vaesen from the core rulebook. It also discusses some characteristics and themes that occur in many local accounts of supernatural creatures. If you are a player, you should stop reading. The information that follows is for the Gamemaster only.

The supernatural population of the islands is extremely diverse, like its cultures. The four nations that call these islands home each have their

own distinct creatures, and even within countries there can be a number of local variants of a particular creature. The descriptions in the following pages offer notes on the most common variants on a particular type.

Otherwise, the information in these pages is organized in the same way as in the *Vaesen* core rulebook. This chapter can be used together with Chapter 8 of the core rulebook to give you everything you need in order to understand the vaesen of Mythic Britain and Ireland and devise mysteries in that setting.

INVISIBILITY

Nordic Vaesen can become invisible at will to those who lack the Sight, but the same is not true of all the creatures described in this chapter. Some are as plainly visible as any natural creature, though they may make up for this with stealth and cunning.

SEPARABLE SOUL

Some supernatural creatures, especially in the Scottish Highlands, have the ability to remove their soul from their body and hide it, making them invulnerable unless the soul is found and destroyed. Wizards and some giants have this ability, as do some other supernatural creatures, but fairies do not.

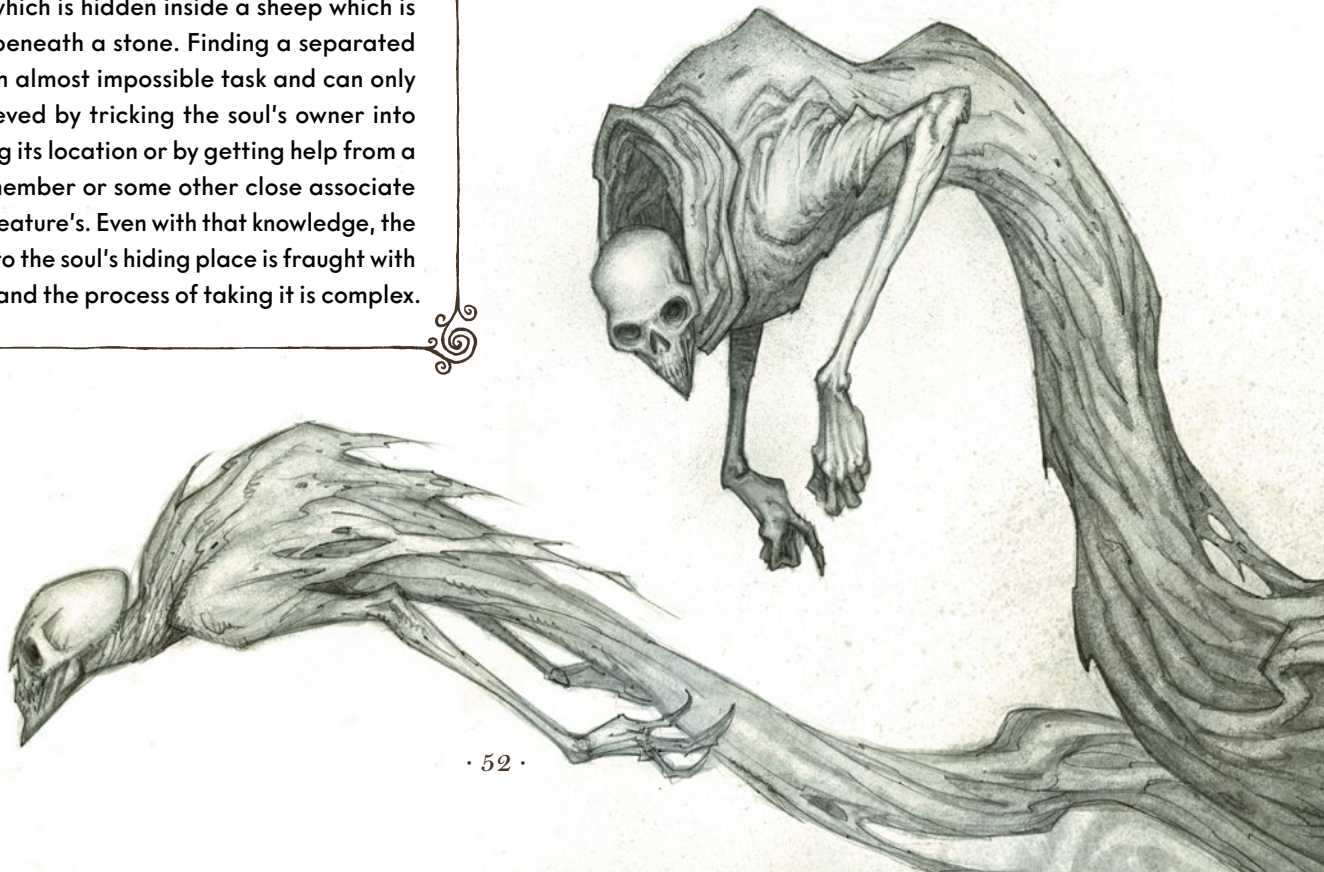
A creature who has hidden their soul never gains a Condition in combat. If the soul can be found, a single Condition is enough to destroy both it and its owner. For this reason, separated souls are always hidden with great care: in an egg, for example, which is hidden inside a duck which is hidden inside a sheep which is hidden beneath a stone. Finding a separated soul is an almost impossible task and can only be achieved by tricking the soul's owner into revealing its location or by getting help from a family member or some other close associate of the creature's. Even with that knowledge, the journey to the soul's hiding place is fraught with danger and the process of taking it is complex.

PARTIAL INVULNERABILITIES

Some very powerful individuals, especially in Scotland and Ireland, have enchanted themselves to be almost invulnerable. In rare cases, a mortal may also be born with an invulnerability, or gain one from dealings with fairies of other supernatural benefactors.

The invulnerability often sounds unbreakable, like Macbeth's protection against any man born of woman, but there is always a loophole that can be found with sufficient ingenuity – or with help from another supernatural creature.

In other cases the creature's vulnerability is clear, and may even be well known, but it is so difficult to fulfil that there seems little chance of killing the creature. In one story, the only thing that can kill the monster is the egg of a certain bird, taken from its nest in a certain inaccessible place, and thrown so it strikes the creature over the heart. Others have a single vulnerable spot, like Achilles' heel in Greek myth.





You must make me a fine Holland shirt,
Without any stitching or needlework.
You must wash it in yonder well,
Where no water sprang, nor rain ever fell.

— THE ELFIN KNIGHT (TRADITIONAL)

IMPOSSIBLE TASKS

The fairies, and certain other supernatural creatures, love to set mortals impossible tasks in exchange for favors, especially as payment for releasing a friend or relative from captivity. Some are impossible to fulfil without supernatural help, while others have loopholes that can be found with a little ingenuity.

An example of an impossible task is to build a castle that is 1,000 miles in every dimension and includes a stone from every quarry in the world by the next daybreak. Less taxing is to reap a field with a sickle of leather, for leather can be hardened by boiling and the challenge does not specifically say that leather sickle cannot be decorated – with steel plates, for example.

CHALLENGES, FAVORS, AND FORFEITS

Fairies and many other supernatural creatures enjoy challenging a talented mortal to a contest, although they may not reveal their true nature when issuing the challenge. Challenges can include feats of strength and skill, music, dancing, poetry, or games like chess and even skittles. There must always be a stake, and it is often a favor to be redeemed later.

A mortal who loses may find themselves pledged to deliver their firstborn to the fairies, or to undertake an impossible task (see box, below). Some creatures are not above rigging the competition by arranging for clouds of biting flies or some other kind of distraction to afflict their mortal opponent.

If the mortal wins, the supernatural creature always honors the terms of the wager, though they can try to subvert the outcome of wishes while keeping to their literal wording. A mortal may gain some magical ability, or the ability to call upon the creature for a single favor in the future.

A common trick is to offer the mortal winner a series of rewards, each more impressive or beautiful than the last. In this case, it is important to choose the smallest, ugliest reward, for everything is covered by a fairy glamor to make it seem like the opposite of what it is: gold and silver become leaves and stones when touched by mortal hands, and fine food and drink become dung and foul water.

It is said that there are some skilled herbalists who can create an oil or ointment that, if applied to the eyes, enables a person to see fairies and other normally invisible creatures.



BANSHEE

Glenblane House is by no means the only house in Scotland with a family tradition of a banshee. Mr. Duncan Glenblane, the current laird, told me her story over a glass of the excellent local whisky. During the wars of the Covenant, the house was sacked and all its occupants slaughtered, save one servant woman who jumped to her death from the high tower rather than submit herself to murder and worse. The screams of her tortured spirit are a sure and baleful omen for the family, and the laird assured me that he had heard her on the night of his own father's death.

— William Stukeley, April 1721

Despite a name that translates from Irish and Scots Gaelic as “fairy woman”, the banshee is a type of ghost. Normally solitary, always female, and usually the result of a violent or traumatic death, it haunts a great house or castle and gives warning of an imminent death in the household. Banshees are often invisible, but can sometimes be seen as spectral figures with wild hair and eyes reddened by crying. They can appear as attractive young women or as ancient and hideous hags. Some reports credit a banshee with the ability to cause death as well as predict it.

A banshee's howl is not always an omen of unavoidable death. They have also been known to scream as a warning, when a family member is about to enter a situation that they cannot survive. On rare occasions, several banshees can come together to lament the death of an exceptionally great or holy person.

The Gamemaster must decide how far a particular banshee's power extends, according to the needs of the story and the preferences of the gaming group.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT — BODY CONTROL — MAGIC 10
MANIPULATION 7 Fear 2/1

MAGICAL POWERS

- ◆ Enchant
- ◆ Curse
- ◆ Cannot be harmed in combat
- ◆ Able to walk through walls
- ◆ Cannot be harmed by physical force

RITUAL

There is much debate on how a banshee can be defeated. Some say it cannot be done, while others maintain that a ceremony of exorcism can be effective.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ◆ The Macmarran family of Dunbogle Castle has dwindled to just one person: the aged and infirm Flora Macmarran, whose two sons were Army officers recently killed in a colonial uprising. She surely cannot hold on for much longer, but the family's banshee has remained strangely silent. The banshee knows that the end of the family means the end of her own existence, and she refuses to howl, trapping Flora in a life of pain and grief.
- ◆ Far from Scotland, an acquaintance of the player characters has been suffering from recurring dreams in which a weeping woman in old-fashioned clothes reaches out to him (or her) imploringly, pointing to a castle in a majestic but unfamiliar landscape. Unknown to anyone except the banshee, the dreamer is the last of the Callans of Dungask and the heir to Dungask Castle, through the illegitimate birth of an ancestor. Meanwhile, at Dungask, the banshee's howl is heard as the aged

and childless David Callan lies dying. The banshee dreads the extinction of the family to which she is attached in the place to which she is attached, and is trying to ensure that the ancestral home continues to be occupied by its rightful owners.

- ◆ Magnus McCrieth is a reclusive scholar who keeps to his house at Blairwhinnie and maintains a voluminous correspondence with contacts around the world – including, perhaps, one of the player characters or one of their contacts. The banshee's wail has been heard outside the lonely house, but Magnus is not ready to die. Instead, he searches for those with the skills and knowledge to negotiate with the spirit for a few more decades of life – or to destroy her, if all else fails.

VARIANTS

The **caoineag** (pronounced *kooh-nyak*, approximately) laments beside a waterfall, stream, or loch. She is invisible and insubstantial, and cannot be seen, touched, harmed, or interacted with in any way.

The **bean-nighe** (pronounced *ben-nyeh*, approximately) takes the form of an ugly old woman who sits by a ford or stream washing the grave-clothes of those who are about to die, crooning a dirge as she does so. If someone can creep up on her undetected and take a firm hold of her, she can be forced to say who is about to die, and to grant three wishes. This is risky, because she will lash out at an attacker with her wet linen, causing paralysis in any body part she strikes.

SECRET

Like any other ghost, a banshee can be laid to rest if the wrong that brought her into being can somehow be set right. A banshee also disappears when the last of her family line dies, or when the family home that she haunts is abandoned and falls into ruin.

BLACK DOG

Finding myself overtaken by darkness on the road 'twixt Taunton and Bridgewater, I was surprised, and not a little anxious, to find a large black dog padding silently beside my horse. I dared not speak, and the dark, shaggy beast, whose size I estimated to be that of a yearling calf, did not favor me with a glance or any other sign. Passing a crossroads a little way from my destination, I looked down to find that my companion was no longer there, though I did not see it leave the road. I learned later that the creature was well-known in the district, and rarely did harm.

— William Stukeley, October 1710

Black dogs haunt the night-time roads in many parts of England. They usually appear only to lone travelers, or groups of 2–3 at most. Some walk alongside travelers for a little way, protecting them from robbers or supernatural threats. They seldom attack physically, but their glowing red eyes can strike fear into the bravest heart.

Black dogs that haunt roads near a crossroads where a gibbet once stood are actually the ghosts of executed criminals. They may be seeking redemption for their sins, or serve as a warning to other evildoers.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 7 **BODY CONTROL 7** **MAGIC 3**
MANIPULATION 9 Fear 2/1

MAGICAL POWERS

- ✦ Enchant
- ✦ Curse
- ✦ **FUR:** Protection 4

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Bloodthirsty +1
- ☐ Irritated
- ☐ On guard +1
- ☐ Furious but wounded +1
- ☐ Broken — disappears but returns the following night

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Bite	2	0

RITUAL

The best way to deal with a black dog is to ignore it completely. Most such creatures do not concern themselves with the living, and only react violently when a mortal approaches or speaks to them

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ✦ The spirit of someone wrongly executed haunts the roads around the crossroads gibbet in the form of a black dog. It ignores most night-time travelers but attacks some: in the past they included the corrupt magistrate who pronounced the unjust sentence and the robbers who actually committed the crimes in question. Today its victims seem random, but investigation will reveal some sin or corruption in their past. It can be laid to rest by removing the spirit's bones from their unmarked grave by the crossroads, having a magistrate pronounce a formal pardon, and giving the remains a Christian burial.
- ✦ A great black dog has been seen in Farfield Manor ever since the fifth earl was killed by Oliver Cromwell's Roundheads in the English Civil War of 1642–1646. A little after midnight, it emerges from the cellar and lies down in front of the fire in the great hall, remaining there until dawn unless anyone approaches or speaks to it, in which case it vanishes, bestowing a curse on whoever bothered



it if they were particularly annoying. If anyone happens to be in the cellar when the dog materializes at night, they will see it emerge from a stone wall, which will be found to cover a secret strongroom containing the family silver that the earl hid from Cromwell's men.

- ◆ The black dog of Hinton has been seen on the roads around the village for centuries, and its appearance has always been followed by the death of someone prominent in the area. Its habit is to appear at the edge of the village, walk to the front door of the house in which someone is about to die, and howl once before vanishing. For the last three nights, though, the great, shaggy, saucer-eyed beast has spent the whole of the night pacing around the village, howling continuously. What manner of disaster is about to befall the terrified community?

SECRET

Prayers can keep a black dog away. One black dog was banished by praying over a pair of clappers and throwing each into a different pond. It is believed that the black dog will stay away until the two clappers are reunited.

VARIANTS

Instead of accompanying travelers, some black dogs are encountered heading in the opposite direction, on unknown business of their own. If anyone speaks to them or tries to approach them, they may be struck dumb, mad, or worse.

A few black dogs act as guardian spirits of a castle or other building. These may be a non-religious form of church grim (see *Vaesen*, page 128).

BOGGART

The area was abuzz with news of a local farmer whose farm was haunted by a troublesome spirit called a boggart. As well as causing all manner of mischief around the house, the creature denied its hosts a wink of sleep, keeping them up all night with ear-splitting crashes and screams. The local parson, arriving with bell, book, and candle to exorcise the spirit, had been sent packing with a bent candlestick and his hat aflame, and the proper ways to deal with such an infestation were the sole topic of conversation in ever hostelry for several miles around.

— William Stukeley, July 1721

Boggarts are troublesome spirits that haunt a house or an outdoor location like a marsh, a cave, or a bridge.

Household boggarts are always solitary, and annoy the family by playing tricks like overturning crocks of food or drink, keeping everyone awake with tapping and other noises, and breaking furniture. They are tricky to identify, since poltergeists and disgruntled brownies often behave in the same way. Boggarts like to hide in small spaces. They can squeeze through the narrowest of gaps. They rarely speak, but sometimes hurl taunts at the household from the shadows.

Outdoor boggarts are more dangerous, leading travelers into danger or panicking horses, so they throw their riders or crash whatever cart or carriage they are pulling. They can infest an area in large numbers, even eating the bodies of mortals whom they kill.

Boggarts take care never to be seen, but if someone with the Sight catches a glimpse of one it generally looks like a hunched and misshapen humanoid. Some are shaggy, with huge, staring eyes. Some are shapeshifters, taking fearsome forms in order to spread panic and confusion.

MAGICAL POWERS

- ◆ Enchant
- ◆ Curse
- ◆ Shapeshift
- ◆ Squeeze through cracks

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 10 BODY CONTROL 8 MAGIC 5
MANIPULATION 7 Fear 1



CONDITIONS

- ☐ Mischievous — plays tricks and causes trouble
- ☐ Angry +1 — threatens and curses, tricks become deadlier
- ☐ Dazed -1
- ☐ Furious +2 — tries to kill anyone within reach and damage its surroundings
- ☐ Panicked -2
- ☐ Broken — Tries to hide, reappearing later to cause more trouble

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Fists	3	0
Thrown object	2	1-3

RITUAL

Boggarts can be kept out of a house or a room by hanging a horseshoe on the door or spreading salt in the doorway. Once they have taken up residence in a location, they are very difficult to dislodge, though domestic boggarts attach themselves to the family rather than the home, even following them when they try to move away. One should be careful never to name a boggart, for when it is given a name it becomes violent and uncontrollable.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ♦ A small group of boggarts has settled under a bridge on the main coach road from Bath to Gloucester, causing a series of fatal crashes. The newspapers have reported them as accidents, but the local people are beginning to suspect some supernatural cause.

- ♦ The small farm of High Eldbourne recently burned down. Farmer Edgar Moore and his family barely escaped with their lives, only to find themselves arrested on suspicion of arson and manslaughter in the death of a hired hand who died in the fire. Faced with inexplicably spoiled crops and potential ruin, Moore took the unusual step of sinking all his savings into an insurance policy a few months ago, and the authorities suspect fraud. His defense, that the farm was haunted by a hostile spirit, is falling on deaf ears.
- ♦ After seven years of exemplary service, Sarah Handley was recently dismissed from Frensham Hall for stealing. She cannot explain how the missing items came to be in her bedroom, and without a reference she has no hope of obtaining a position elsewhere. Already homeless, she faces complete ruin unless the truth can be uncovered. Even she does not know that she was the subject of a boggart's trick, after she replaced a horseshoe that had fallen from its place above the tradesman's door at the back of the house.

SECRET

It is possible to get the better of a boggart by making a deal that it cannot possibly win and causing it to leave in frustration (see box below).

A Northamptonshire farmer got the better of a boggart by offering it a share of his crop: the part above ground or below. The first year, the boggart chose the underground part, so he planted wheat, leaving the boggart nothing but roots and stalks. The next year the boggart chose the above-ground part, so he planted turnips, leaving it just leaves and stalks. Eventually it moved away in frustration.

DULLAHAN

The road between the town and the graveyard is shunned by the locals, for fear of a headless rider who is said to collect the souls of the doomed on behalf of "Crom Dubh", which as far as I was able to discover is an ancient spirit of death. No one escapes this relentless hunter of souls, I was told, but despite that I met one man, venerable but still hale, who claimed to have survived an encounter thanks to a gold coin that he wore around his neck on a leather thong.

— William Stukeley, October 1712

Dullahans travel Irish roads at night, collecting the souls of those who are destined to die. A dullahan is a solitary, headless figure, either riding a horse or driving a coach. It carries its head in its left hand, held high to see far off and over obstacles, while its right holds a whip made of a human spine. Its head is rotting but still alive, with a ghastly grin and huge eyes that can see through the darkest night and the thickest fog.

Their horses are always black and are either headless or have fiery red eyes. Coaches are often made of human bones, with candles placed in skulls as lamps and an awning made of grave-cloth or dried human skin. A dullahan's horse or coach travels so fast that its hooves or wheels are red-hot, and can set fire to nearby hedgerows. It can cause all gates and doors in its path to fly open.

If anyone stops to stare at a dullahan, it strikes them with its whip and blinds them. Anyone who opens their door as a dullahan passes by risks being drenched in blood.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 9 BODY CONTROL 9 MAGIC 9
MANIPULATION 8 Fear 2/1

MAGICAL POWERS

- ◆ Enchant
- ◆ Curse
- ◆ Has an extra action in combat that can only be used to strike with its whip
- ◆ Can ride or drive over any kind of terrain without penalty

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Focused +1 – attacks in passing
- ☐ Irritated
- ☐ Angry +2 – stops to fight
- ☐ Furious but wounded –1 – curses and drops its head for one round
- ☐ Enraged – swaps initiative with a PC of its choice
- ☐ Broken – retreats but returns the following night

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Throw head*	2	1–3
Whip†	3	0–2
Death curse‡	—	0–3

* Head returns to dullahan's hand automatically.

† Causes blindness in any mortal it strikes.

‡ Only possible against the dullahan's designated victim. The dullahan points and its head speaks the name of the person destined to die. They drop dead on the spot and the dullahan leaves, carrying their soul to the afterworld.

RITUAL

A dullahan is repelled by gold. It fears the precious metal so much that even a gold-headed pin dropped in its path will cause it to halt. Also, it is unable to move through running water, although it can cross over it by means of a bridge.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ◆ An encounter with a dullahan has sent Fergal O'Sullivan to his bedchamber, armed with every scrap of gold he can muster. Unable to enter, the harbinger of death circles his house endlessly, its head howling in frustration. Family and neighbors have fled, a few of them suffering blindness and other injuries in the process, and the standoff seems likely to continue indefinitely.
- ◆ Davey Blake and his gang of smugglers have hit upon a plan that they think is foolproof. Using bones scavenged from the local farms and burial grounds, they have disguised their cart to look like that of a dullahan, and created a headless disguise for its driver. No one will dare stop them

as they move their contraband across the countryside, they are certain — until they meet the true dullahan on the road, come for the soul of one of the gang.

- ◆ Father Andrew Byrne recently had a dream in which Saint Patrick himself told him that his days are numbered, but he is not afraid. The saint also told him of the manner of his demise, in holy battle against a champion of the old religion to save the souls of his flock. The Father has spent every night since the dream planted at a crossroads on the edge of town, dressed in full robes and armed with a Bible and every spiritual weapon he could muster, waiting for the dullahan to come to him.



SECRET

A dullahan's head is its weakness. If a mortal can seize the creature's skull, it is forced to obey them. Destroying its skull destroys the dullahan.

GLAISTIG

Glenfuath – the vale of the frightful spirit, in the Gaelic – was well-named, as I discovered. Beside the ford at Hagburn I saw by the roadside a young and attractive woman dressed in green, who reached up imploringly and gave me to understand by her gestures, for she spoke no English and I none of the Scottish tongue, that she desired me to let her mount behind me and carry her over the ford. Having been forewarned by local tradition, though, I resisted the chivalrous instinct and left her where she sat, and by so doing, I was told, most likely saved my own life.

– William Stukeley, August 1714

The glaistig most often takes the form of a young woman with long, yellow-blond hair and a pale, grayish cast to her skin. She wears flowing, green dress, which may conceal goat-like legs. However some glaistigs are completely human in appearance and some can take the form of a goat at will. Glaistigs employ various tricks to lure lone, male travellers to their lairs, where they are overpowered, killed, and eaten. Music, dancing, and the promise of romance are their most common inducements, and some – like the one encountered by Stukeley above – wait by a stream or ford for someone who can be persuaded to carry them across. Once on a man's back, the glaistig tears out his throat from behind.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 6 BODY CONTROL 8 MAGIC 9
MANIPULATION 10 Fear 0

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Luring – tries to get a victim to follow her or help her
- ☐ Angry +1 – threatens and curses
- ☐ Pleading -1
- ☐ Fawning and seductive -1
- ☐ Unyielding rage +2 – grapples and tears at opponents
- ☐ Panic and escape -2
- ☐ Broken – dissolves into pale mist, but reappears the next day

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Claws	2	0

MAGICAL POWERS

- ❖ Enchant
- ❖ Curse
- ❖ Has an extra action in combat that can only be used for movement or to grapple an opponent

SECRET

Aglaistig was once a human woman who bargained with the fairies for immortality or other supernatural powers. If she can be made mortal again, her age catches up with her and she crumbles to dust. Consuming St. John's wort will break the fairy enchantment, as can Christian baptism – though it will not be easy to baptize someone against their will.

RITUAL

Glaistigs flee from the cross and the sound of church bells. They are also repelled by cold iron. Glaistigs can be defeated with certain magical or blessed items, or by damage from other supernatural creatures, but they have been known to return.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ♦ The market fair at Bankhead attracts people from miles around. It makes a good hunting ground for a glaistig, who can pass unnoticed among the strangers who flock to the town. Unnoticed, of course, except by the young men who catch her eye, and whom she lures to dark alleys and other quiet spots to kill and eat.

- ♦ The bleak ford of Earnswater has long had a bad reputation. It is said that those who pass by there alone, especially at night, do not return. This has not deterred the progressive Earl of Earn from having a bridge built to replace the ford as part of a program of road improvements on his estate. The work is not progressing to His Lordship's satisfaction, though, as some of the workmen have disappeared and others have deserted the project, claiming that the place is haunted.
- ♦ William McGannell, the heir to Strathholm, was brutally murdered last night in the castle yard, not far from the byre. His screams were heard by the entire household, and they moved quickly under Lord Strathholm's direction to secure all the doors and windows before beginning a thorough search for the murderer. They have not yet found the glaistig who is hiding among the livestock in the form of a goat.

VARIANTS

The **baobhan sith** (pronounced *ba'avan shee*, approximately) haunts remote upland areas at night and may be encountered in small groups of 4–6 individuals. They follow groups of hunters and herders until they stop for the night, and appear when one of the men mentions the lack of female companionship. Instead of tearing their victims to pieces they suck their blood through skin contact, usually by dancing. Their victims do not usually notice until it is too late.

The **dearg due** (pronounced *d'yerug doo*, approximately) seems to have been invented by an English clergyman in 1928, but could exist in Mythic Ireland. It is a kind of revenant, created when a woman commits suicide to escape a forced and/or abusive marriage. She rises from the grave to kill the man or men responsible for her suffering, and continues to haunt the area killing any men she can find, luring them with her beauty and tearing them limb from limb. She can be kept in her grave by piling heavy stones on the top, and killed by being decapitated in the light of the full moon.

The **leanan sidhe** (pronounced *lanawn shee*, approximately) is known across Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man. She is attracted to artists and artisans, becoming her victim's muse as he burns himself out in a frenzy of creativity. He dies of exhaustion, but the work he produces while under the creature's influence is of almost superhuman brilliance. It is though that the leanan sidhe somehow feeds on the creative energy that she inspires.



HAG

The standing stones of ancient times are the subject of many tales told among the rural folk who live nearby. While travelling across the county of Gloucester I came upon a typical example in the tale of Old Meg. The gray and weathered stone, not quite the height of a man and a little broader, stands on a valley side near the village of Annonsbury, and is held by the local people to be the body of a pagan witch, who was turned to stone through the prayers of Saint Birinus during his mission of conversion in these parts.

— William Stukeley, June 1724

Hags have the appearance of old, ugly women whose faces are twisted into masks of rage. Their clothes are often ragged, their teeth are sharp, and their fingernails have grown into iron-hard claws.

There are many theories regarding their origins. Some say they are female trolls or ogres, smaller, more intelligent, but no less malignant. In some tales, their sons are all ogres and their daughters are all hags. Others believe that they are witches whose dealings with the powers of evil have transformed them into a

barely-human form, while others still regard them as fallen demi-goddesses, fragments of the ancient earth-mother whose worship was supplanted in ancient times by the rise of the weather-controlling sky-father as farming took over from hunting and gathering.

Hags usually live in remote, forbidding places such as caves and deep woods. Some live underwater in dismal pools or deep rivers. They may be encountered at night or in bad weather, attacking lone travelers or stealing children to eat.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 10 **BODY CONTROL 8** **MAGIC 10**
MANIPULATION 4 **Fear 2/1**

MAGICAL POWERS

- ✦ Enchant
- ✦ Curse
- ✦ Trollcraft
- ✦ **HARD SKIN:** Protection 2
- ✦ **WEATHER:** The weather around a hag is always colder, and she can call up a blizzard at will.
- ✦ **BLIGHT PLANTS:** A hag can cause plants around her to blacken and die, as if from the effects of a hard frost.
- ✦ Can breathe underwater (if water dwelling)
- ✦ Can transform into an animal (usually hare, owl, or deer) or a standing stone. When in standing stone form, staff turns into a thorn-bush nearby.



CONDITIONS

- ☐ Vengeful
- ☐ Cautious
- ☐ Tactical
- ☐ Bleeding -1
- ☐ Wounded -1
- ☐ Panic-stricken -1
- ☐ Broken – Sinks into the ground and stays away for 1D6 days. If the damage was inflicted with a blessed weapon or holy attack, the hag is turned to stone permanently, or until roused by some folk ritual or blood sacrifice.

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Claws, bite	2	0
Staff	2	0-1

RITUAL

Certain herbs, placed above windows and doorways, can prevent a hag from entering a building or room. These include sprigs of rowan, St. John's wort, and four-leaf clovers. Cold iron, such as a horseshoe, placed above a door or window has the same effect.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ❖ St. Merren's School has recently welcomed its first class of boys to the idyllic Derbyshire countryside. The building was constructed near a river, where swimming and boating are encouraged – but several boys have gone missing, to the dismay of their wealthy parents and the embarrassment of the school. The authorities, including experts from Scotland Yard, are combing the area without success. No one pays any attention to local legends about a dangerous spirit inhabiting the river.
- ❖ The village of Amberforth is facing ruin. Spring somehow failed to come in this remote corner of England, leaving the frozen ground too hard to plow and the newborn lambs and calves freezing

to death. A local hag has been angered somehow, and is punishing her mortal neighbors with an everlasting winter.

- ❖ The village of Broadfleet has become home to a thriving colony of artists, writers, and other bohemian types. Many are dabbling in occultism, and a small group has begun researching ancient pagan goddesses and attempting to reconstruct their worship. A local hag, diminished since the coming of Christianity twelve centuries ago, has made contact with the budding cult. She is careful to keep her true nature secret as she guides the mortals toward establishing the germ of a cult, in the hope of growing it until she regains her former power.

VARIANTS

The **cailleach bheur** (pronounced *kall-yach vair*, approximately) from Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man is a personification of winter, with a blue face and a skinny, starveling figure. She can call up bad weather at will. They were once weather goddesses, but are now diminished by the spread of Christianity. They are ruled by a one-eyed giantess named Beira, who claims the title Queen of Winter.

Black Annis, from Leicestershire, has a blue face and iron claws in place of nails, with which she can dig a cave from solid rock to shelter in. She waits in ambush to seize and devour passing children and lambs, for their meat is the tenderest.

Jenny Greenteeth from Lancashire and **Peg Fowler** from the River Tees lurk underwater and drag careless children to their deaths in deeper water.

The **Fad Felen** of Gwynedd in Wales was sent as a punishment for the sins of the people. She might appear anywhere on the same errand. She has gray skin and her hair, teeth, and eyes are all yellow. She walks with a hunched gait, and her hands are armed with claws as hard as iron. Her name means "yellow pestilence" and her breath carries the plague.

SECRET

The only way to stop a hag is to defeat her with blessed weapons and force her into stone form. Breaking the stone up and burying the pieces in consecrated ground – ideally spreading them across several parishes – may destroy the hag, though she may be able to return if the pieces are ever reunited.

KNOCKER

I had returned to my lodgings after a day spent surveying the ancient tin workings, some of which date from Biblical times, when a fellow drinker jokingly asked me if I had encountered any of the Knockers. A hush immediately descended upon the tap-room, and others present, locals all, assured the speaker that the little people of the mines were not to be spoken of lightly, lest some disaster befall the mine and the community it supported. Ruffled spirits were only soothed by a round of drinks for the house.

— William Stukeley, May 1716

Knockers stand about 18 inches (45 cm) tall, and look like human miners with oversized heads. The inhabit the tin mines of Cornwall, where the best deposits can always be found by following the sound of their tools. They have also been known to knock on the walls of a mine to warn their mortal neighbours of an imminent collapse. Knockers are not hostile, but have been known to pilfer food and move tools as a prank. They will throw stones from the shadows at anyone who mocks them. If seriously offended, they will abandon a mine, leaving it barren and profitless for the mortals left behind. They are strong out of all proportion to their size, and can out-work a human miner quite easily.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 10 **BODY CONTROL 8** **MAGIC 4**
MANIPULATION 6 **Fear 0**

MAGICAL POWERS

- ✦ Enchant
- ✦ Can cause mine workings to collapse
- ✦ Can tunnel twice as fast as a human miner
- ✦ Can curse a mine to barrenness
- ✦ Can become invisible for a short time

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Scornful
- ☐ Irritated +1 (becomes invisible and pranks enemies)
- ☐ Dazed -1
- ☐ Hateful +2 (may cause a cave-in to cover retreat)
- ☐ Bleeding -2
- ☐ Panicked rage -2 (wounded, but always acts with the highest initiative)
- ☐ Broken — hides for 1D6 hours and plans a terrible revenge

COMBAT

In combat, a handful of knockers count as one NPC with shared initiative and actions.

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Fists	2	0
Tools	3	0
Rock	1	3

RITUAL

Knockers are repelled by the sign of the cross, Christian prayer, and the mention of God or Jesus. They also dislike whistling and swearing, although these are more likely to infuriate them than to drive them away.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ◆ Davey Pascoe had to leave the mine after an accident which broke his leg and left him with a permanent limp. He blames the knockers for his accident and the poverty that followed it, and is plotting revenge. One night he breaks into the mine's stores and steals three barrels of blasting powder, which he intends to detonate deep in the mine to kill as many knockers as he can.
- ◆ After hearing of the knockers' aversion to the cross, the Reverend Stiles, a newcomer to Cornwall, decided to root out this primitive and anti-Christian superstition. Against the earnest entreaties of his parishioners, he descends into the mine with a Bible, a cross, and a bottle of holy water, singing hymns as he went. The fearful miners heard his voice fade as he went deeper into the mine, until all was silence. He has not been seen since.
- ◆ Joe Kellow has the luck of the mines, it is said. No other miner can match his talent for finding the best deposits, and he can mine more in a day than his fittest colleagues. It is whispered that he made a deal of some kind with the knockers when he was a young man, but many discount the rumour as baseless jealousy. He has saved his money and married well, but as the time comes for his first child to be born, he becomes more and more nervous.

SECRET

Knockers may leave a mine if they are subjected to constant violations of their taboo against Christianity, or if the customary offerings of food and money stop. Blessing a mine with holy water has been known to drive them away. If the knockers leave a mine, it will often cease to produce, and it may become dangerous. They have been known to collapse a mine's entire workings as they leave.

VARIANTS

The **bluecaps** of northern England's coalfields are invisible, appearing only as a blue spark that floats in the air. They work alongside mortal miners, pulling carts and performing other useful tasks. They insist on being paid for their labours, though, with their pay left in a remote corner of the mine. If paid below the standard rate – even by a farthing – a bluecap refuses to touch the money and stops working until paid properly. If overpaid, the bluecap leaves the excess, taking only his due.

Cutty Soams is an invisible spirit that haunts certain mines in the north of England, playing tricks that can vary from embarrassing to deadly. He will cut the ropes holding the mine-carts together or deliver a severe beating to an unpopular foreman. He has also been suspected of causing fires and explosions underground.



LEPRECHAUN

That morning one of my host's tenants begged the favour of an audience, and I heard afterward that he had come into enough money to buy out his lease and take ownership of his cottage and its land as a freeholder. The locals were at a loss to account for his sudden prosperity. Some muttered that the coin was somehow ill-gotten, though never in the man's hearing. Others, older or after an evening's drinking, whispered that he had got the better of a leprechaun, although they were careful to avoid naming the creature, using the formula "the little shoemaker" to evade the wrath of the fairy folk.

— William Stukeley, September 1712

Leprechauns are the shoemakers of the fairy folk, and on the rare occasions when a mortal encounters one he is usually working on a small shoe for some fairy dignitary. They look like small humans, a foot or two tall, and wear fine shoes with bright buckles. They are incorrigible tricksters and spinners of yarns, and delight in misleading, embarrassing, and defrauding mortals. A leprechaun knows the location of every buried treasure in his home area, and it is said that anyone who can catch and hold him can force him to tell where treasure can be found. However,

leprechauns are cunning enough to lie their way out of most situations, and can wield a heavy walking-stick called a shillelagh to good effect. If captured, a leprechaun will try to pull out his snuff-box and throw or blow its contents in his captor's face, escaping while the unlucky mortal is sneezing helplessly.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 5 BODY CONTROL 8 MAGIC 8
MANIPULATION 10 Fear 0

MAGICAL POWERS

- ✦ Enchant
- ✦ Curse
- ✦ Draws two initiative cards and uses the best one
- ✦ **WRIGGLY:** Use **BODY CONTROL** instead of **MIGHT** for grappling. The leprechaun always tries to break free, and never tries to hold an opponent
- ✦ **BLOW SNUFF:** Blinds one opponent until they make a successful **FORCE** roll. The test may be repeated once per turn. Even after the test succeeds, the victim has impaired eyesight (**VIGILANCE -1**) for another five turns.
- ✦ **SHOEMAKING:** can make shoes of exceptional quality and teach a mortal exceptional shoemaking skill
- ✦ Can turn invisible at will



CONDITIONS

- ☐ Playful -1
- ☐ Feisty and aggravating +1 (pranks become dangerous)
- ☐ Offended -1
- ☐ Furious +1 – uses both initiative cards
- ☐ Broken – blows snuff, turns invisible, and escapes

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Fists	2	0
Shillelagh	3	0
Snuff	—	0

RITUAL

Leprechauns can be defeated by grappling, but never killed. They share the common fairy aversion to Christianity and its trappings, but instead of being repelled by them they are more likely to respond with a series of pranks, escalating from embarrassing to deadly.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ♦ Daniel O'Shea spends his days in the tavern begging for a drink and his nights digging holes all across the countryside. He was once a young man of great promise, honest and hard-working, and betrothed to the prettiest girl in the county. Then he changed, and lost everything. His neighbors think he is mad. Seven years ago he caught a leprechaun, and forced the fairy creature to lead him to a buried treasure. The leprechaun took him to the foot of a gnarled tree before disappearing. Daniel had no shovel with him, but took out his pocket-knife and marked the tree with his initials. Returning with a shovel and a sack,

he found that every tree for a mile around was marked with his initials.

- ♦ Fergus Dowd is in high spirits, carrying a bucket that he says contains his fortune. He claims to have wrestled a leprechaun for it, but anyone who looks sees that the bucket is full of manure. Only Fergus sees gold when he looks at it.
- ♦ The shoemakers of Culdarrig are surprised when a young shepherd-boy comes to town and starts making shoes. The boy is barely literate and has never served an apprenticeship, but there is something uncanny in his eyes and some whisper that he must have fairy blood. His shoes are of such quality that even a master cobbler would struggle to match them, and he starts to cut into the others' business. The rumor of fairy blood is true, and the boy was taught his craft by a leprechaun.

VARIANTS

Clurichauns, and their English cousins the **abbey lubbers** and the **buttery spirits**, are close relatives of the leprechaun, but live a life of idleness rather than plying a trade. They seek out houses and monasteries where the servants are dishonest or incompetent, and establish themselves in the food stores, feasting riotously each night on their unwilling host's provisions.

SECRET

It is almost impossible to get the better of a leprechaun, and any temporary success will be followed by vengeful pranks that may turn deadly. In theory, a leprechaun can be banished or even destroyed by a powerful priest, although only medieval saints have ever been said to achieve this. The best way to deal with a leprechaun is to engineer a situation where the creature falls foul of a more powerful being, forcing the leprechaun to flee or be killed.

NUCKELAVEE

The tracks on the shore were neither horse, nor cow, nor sheep, yet the beast that made them was clearly a quadruped. For a full yard to either side of the creature's path, the grass and heather were blackened and blighted. Its path made straight for the seaweed-burners' camp, with but one deviation: instead of crossing the small stream that ran down from the loch, the tracks made a long circuit inland and around the spring-head. It was that which had saved the lives of those who saw the nuckelavee – though some would argue that their reason was not spared by the hideous sight.

— William Stukeley, May 1726

The nuckelavee of the Orkney islands is shaped like a combination of horse and human, with arms long enough to reach the ground. Its head has a single, burning eye, and noxious gas billows from its mouth. The creature's legs have fins as well as hooves. Even more horrifying is the fact that it has no skin: its sinews, muscles, and organs heave and pulsate as black blood flows between them through yellow veins.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 9 **BODY CONTROL 9** **MAGIC 9**
MANIPULATION 7 **Fear 3/2**

MAGICAL POWERS

- ✦ Enchant
- ✦ Curse
- ✦ Can breathe underwater
- ✦ Breath wilts plants and sickens animals
- ✦ Can cause plague and drought

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Angry +1
- ☐ Spiteful
- ☐ Mad +1
- ☐ Vengeful – drags someone into the deep if possible
- ☐ Furious +2 – tries to destroy everything and everyone
- ☐ Wounded and raging +1
- ☐ Broken – seizes the nearest victim and retreats into the deep. Returns after 1D6 minutes.

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Fists	2	0
Bite	2	0
Trample	2	0
Breath	2	0–2

RITUAL

There is no specific ritual to get rid of a nuckelavee. If the relevant secret is uncovered (see box), someone with the right skills could entreat the Sea Mother to end its rampage. This course is far from guaranteed to be successful, and will probably see the character making a terrible bargain or incurring a terrible debt.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ◆ The inhabitants of the tiny island of Skegsay have fallen ill with a mysterious wasting disease. Local doctors are baffled, and the authorities are refusing to let anyone on or off the island, despite the islander's desperate entreaties that their island has been cursed and they must evacuate in order to save their lives. A nuckelavee has caused the sickness in response to the islanders' burning of seaweed to fertilize their fields, and although no one has seen it yet it will shortly begin ravaging the land.
- ◆ Exploring a local cave, a party of visiting geologists stumbles upon the lair of a nuckelavee. All but one are killed, and the survivor is so traumatized by the encounter that he is left unable to speak – or do anything else except scream until he is sedated with a heavy dose of laudanum. A local tradition warns people to keep away from the cave, although no one remembers why.
- ◆ A local landowner diverts a stream across his land from a small loch, inadvertently creating a small island bounded on two sides by fresh water and on the third by the sea. This angers a local nuckelavee, which appears to terrorize the workmen cutting the new channel.

SECRET

The nuckelavee cannot stand fresh water. It cannot cross even the narrowest fresh-water stream, and even a splash of fresh water will cause it pain and cost it all of its actions for the next round.

The only force able to control a nuckelavee is the Sea Mother, an ancient spirit who may once have been a goddess. According to tradition, she keeps the beast confined through the summer months, but lets it rampage at will through the winter.

The nuckelavee is enraged by the smell of burning seaweed, which is unfortunate since seaweed ash is the cheapest and most plentiful fertilizer for the island's thin and rocky soil. It has been known to cause droughts or plagues in retaliation.



PIXIE

I have never in all my travels experienced such difficulty as I did on the road from Bodmin to St. Austell. A journey of no more than a dozen miles took all of the day and much of the night, so that it was near midnight when I arrived at my destination, cold, wet, and exhausted upon a cold, wet, and exhausted horse. Upon hearing my tale, the locals at the inn chuckled and exchanged knowing glances, assuring me that I had been “pisky-led” until the little people tired of their sport. Had I taken one of several well-known precautions, they said, I might have been spared the ordeal, and spent the afternoon and evening snug in the inn, as they had clearly done themselves.

— William Stukeley, July 1719

Pixies, or piskies as they are sometimes called, are native to the south-western counties of Cornwall and Devon. They stand 9–12 inches (23–30 cm) tall with red hair, pointed ears, and turned-up noses. They love to play tricks on travelers, leading them astray and even directing them into bogs and other hazards. Their tricks may turn deadly if the victim is a poor sport. They have been known to steal horses and ride them to exhaustion. Another trick is to enchant a bag of dung or toadstools to look like gold and leave it for a mortal to find. The glamor ends as soon as the victim tries to spend the “treasure”.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 4 BODY CONTROL 8 MAGIC 9
MANIPULATION 7 Fear 1

SECRET

Pixies gather in large numbers at ancient barrows and stone circles to dance and wrestle one another, and someone who remains unseen can find an opportunity to steal something from them, which can be traded for a magical favor.



MAGICAL POWERS

- ◆ Enchant
- ◆ Curse
- ◆ Trollcraft
- ◆ **ILLUSION:** makes noxious substances or places look beautiful or valuable
- ◆ **STRAY SOD:** renders a victim unable to find their way to their destination. **MANIPULATION** against **OBSERVATION**. The effects last one scene, and extra successes allow the pixie to lead the victim anywhere they want.
- ◆ **STRAY LIGHT:** like that of the will-o'-the-wisp, used to mislead and confuse travelers.

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Playful -1
- ☐ Feisty and aggravating +1 (pranks turn dangerous or deadly)
- ☐ Offended -1
- ☐ Furious +1 – uses two initiative cards
- ☐ Broken – Escapes invisibly

COMBAT

In combat, a handful of pixies count as one NPC with shared initiative and actions.

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Bite, weapon	1	0

RITUAL

The following measures have been found to protect a person from pixie tricks: turning one's coat inside-out; carrying a "wicken" (wicker) cross made of willow or hazel, or a little salt, or a piece of bread in one's pocket; wearing boots with iron hobnails; or whistling as one goes. No known power can kill them.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ◆ The parishioners of Porthgoen just buried their old village curate, and are awaiting his replacement from London. Unfortunately, the local pixies could not resist tormenting the inexperienced clergyman, and he has been riding endlessly through the countryside for three days now. Unless someone finds him, he may never reach the village.
- ◆ Dan Penhaligon is a notorious local drunkard, always the last to leave the pub perched unsteadily on his pony, which knows the way home all by itself. One night his wife hears the pony arrive home, but Dan is not aboard. A search of the area may find him, either sleeping under a hedgerow in a spot that is far off his route, or head-down in a bog with just his boots sticking out of the mud. It is well-known that pixies love to play tricks on drunkards.
- ◆ Annie Tremannon seems to have gone mad. She spends all day and all night searching under a hedgerow at the edge of her family's smallholding for something she has lost, and becomes violent if anyone restrains her or tries to help her, accusing them of wanting her treasure for themselves. A few days ago she found a pot of gold at the base of a tree, and buried it under the hedgerow for safekeeping while she decided what to do with the money. When she went back for it, all she dug up was a hollow log filled with mold, for the "treasure" was a pixie trick

VARIANTS

The **aos sí** of Scotland and Ireland behave in similar ways, but are fairies (*Vaesen*, page 130) rather than pixies. According to Cornish lore, the fairies and pixies fought a war long ago which resulted in the fairies being expelled from pixie territory.

The **gwyllion** of Wales are uglier and more evil, lurking by roadsides to lead travelers to their doom. Some of them are similar in appearance to hags (page 64).

The **grigs** of Somerset are similar to pixies, and wear distinctive red knitted caps.

The **pechs** of Scotland are taller at 3–4 ft (90–120 cm) tall, and extremely strong. They are gifted builders, able to raise a strong tower in a single night.

POOKA

There were many in the village who could recount the tale of some encounter with the creature. One old dame, out gathering wood, had come across a pile of sticks that reared up at her when she tried to pick it up, hooting and mocking her in a human voice. A dairy maid told of chasing one cow 'half across the farm' only to discover, after she had given up the chase and walked near half an hour back, that the cow she sought was standing patiently by the milking-shed, and according to the farm hands had been there most of the morning. There were many such tales, all told with good humor, for the creature was never known to cause harm.

— William Stukeley, September 1712

The pooka (also spelled *phouka*, *púca*, *bucca*, and others) is a shapeshifting trickster that is common throughout the islands. It can take the form of almost anything, and delights in leading its victims on a long chase or surprising them in other ways. Its true form is unknown, though it often appears as a goat, pig, horse, or cow. It can also imitate almost any inanimate object.

Unlike fairies and others, the pooka does not victimize drunkards, or bad-tempered people, or members of the clergy. Instead it seems to play its pranks on those who are most likely to take them in good part and tell others their stories. It is seldom malicious, and its tricks are never deadly.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 8 BODY CONTROL 12 MAGIC 9
MANIPULATION 8 Fear 0

MAGICAL POWERS

- ❖ Can take a fast action to switch between any shape and size and any other shape and size
- ❖ Has an extra fast action that can only be used for movement
- ❖ Draws two initiative cards and uses the best one

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Playful -1
- ☐ Feisty and aggravating +1
- ☐ Furious +1 — uses both initiative cards
- ☐ Broken — shapeshifts and tries to escape

COMBAT

The pooka never enters combat, preferring to escape by changing its shape and size.

RITUAL

Pookas can only be harmed by magic items or by violence from other supernatural creatures. There is no report of anyone succeeding in killing a pooka.

SECRET

If a pooka can be wrestled into submission, it may become a helpful household spirit like a *vaettir* (*Vaesen*, page 158) or a brownie (page 83). The best way to keep hold of a pooka as it changes shape constantly is to throw something over it, like a sheet or your coat.



EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ◆ An exceptionally fine-looking cow has appeared between two neighboring farms, standing with two legs on one side of the boundary and two legs on the other. The two farmers are arguing over the cow, each one trying to prove that more of it is on his land than on his neighbor's. The cow is a pooka, and when it gets bored of watching the quarrel it may wander off, evading the farmer whose land it crosses, or it may wait until no one is looking and either disappear or turn into some other thing.
- ◆ A pooka haunts a stretch of road or some other location, waiting for a likely victim. It appears in the form of a beautiful horse, complete with saddle and bridle, and it will let anyone mount it. As soon as someone is in the saddle the creature takes off at a wild gallop, treating its rider to a hair-raising ride along steep crags and through dense woods full of overhanging branches before dumping its burden into a pond, bog, or briar patch.
- ◆ A pooka turns into a pot of gold and waits for someone to pick it up. Then it turns into an array of other objects in rapid succession, such as an anvil, a cow, a barrel of whisky, a sack of coal, and a hive of bees. When its victim puts it down, it sprouts a pair of legs from the bottom of whatever form it is currently in, and runs off laughing.

VARIANTS

Pooka, or phouka, are the Irish names, but identical creatures are found in many parts of the land. For example: the **Hedley Kow** and the **Picktree Brag** are from particular parts of north-east England, while elsewhere similar creatures are known by names like **dunnie**, **bogy**, and **brag**.

REDCAP

The ruin of Dryholme Tower stands in a commanding position overlooking the coach road from Carlisle to Dumfries. Destroyed during the time of the Border Reivers, it is shrouded in legend and I was eager to survey the ruins. I quickly found, though that no one local could be induced to venture there at any price, for the tower was said to be haunted by those violent northern spirits known as red-caps, and it was held that to trespass there was death.

— William Stukeley, July 1714

Redcaps make their lairs in ruined castles and amongst other scenes of violence. They look almost human, appearing as hunched and wrinkled figures with stringy hair, large teeth, fiery red eyes, and fingers that end in talon-like claws. In addition to the red caps for which they are named, they wear iron boots and a few scraps of armor, and carry pikes or other polearms.

They raid around their lair and attack trespassers without mercy, dipping their hats in the blood of the slain. It is said that no mortal can outrun a redcap.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 10 **BODY CONTROL 10** **MAGIC 4**
MANIPULATION 6 **Fear 1**

MAGICAL POWERS

- ◆ Enchant
- ◆ Curse
- ◆ Has two extra actions in combat that can only be used for movement

CONDITIONS

- ☐ Aggressive +1
- ☐ Angry +2 – threatens and curses
- ☐ Uncertain -1
- ☐ Afraid -1
- ☐ Bleeding but furious +1 – all-out attacks
- ☐ Badly injured -2
- ☐ Broken – flees to lair

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Claws	2	0
Polearm	3	0
Thrown rock	3	1–3

RITUAL

Redcaps are terrified by readings from Scripture or the sight of a cross. Either will cause them to vanish with a dismal yell, leaving one of their long teeth behind.

Redcaps are immune to normal weapons, but may be wounded by blessed or magical weapons or by violence from other vaesen.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ◆ Construction of a new railway line from Carlisle to Glasgow has been interrupted by a series of deaths in a narrow pass below the ruined Marholme Tower. The redcaps who live in the tower are preying on the railway crews, and after a few deaths the workers abandoned the site en masse. The railway company is trying to hire more workers, but word has got round that the line is somehow cursed.
- ◆ A riot broke out a few days ago in the small border town of Kirkholme. On one side was Viscount Charles Turnbull, a descendant of the 16th-century reiver lord who last owned the place. He says that he wants to rebuild it and live there, but secretly he intends to search for a treasure that is mentioned in some old papers that came down to him from his ancestor. The locals violently oppose the plan, claiming that there are redcaps in the tower and to trespass there would place the whole area in jeopardy.
- ◆ The Northumberland Constabulary has called in help from Scotland Yard to help solve a grisly mass murder. A group of well-born tourists, including a cousin of the Duke of Northumberland, were all violently attacked near Hadlingham Castle while out on a landscape painting expedition. The redcaps killed them all, leaving their mutilated corpses lying where they fell. The police have no suspects, and no idea what happened, but are under increasing pressure to bring someone to justice.

SECRET

Redcaps must constantly dip their caps in fresh blood, for if it ever dries out, they die.



SELKIE

One of my companions, seeing a fine, fat seal sunning itself on the strand, reached for his musket, but our guide stayed his hand. He explained that this seal was of a breed that the locals regard as supernatural, and that to harm one was to invite the worst possible luck.

— William Stukeley, April 1726

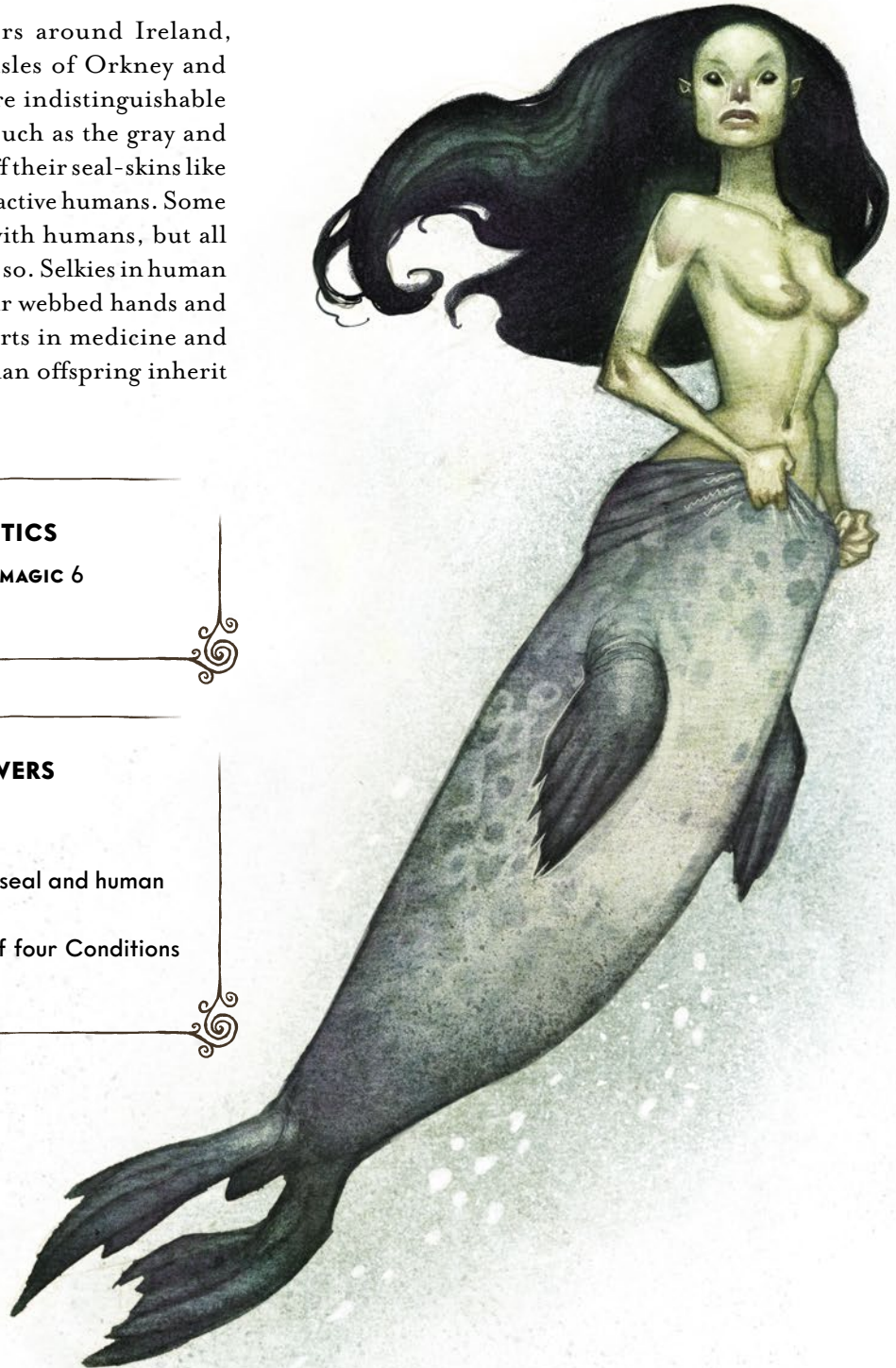
The selkies inhabit the waters around Ireland, Scotland, and the northern isles of Orkney and Shetland. In seal form they are indistinguishable from the larger seal species, such as the gray and crested seal, but they can take off their seal-skins like a coat to assume the form of attractive humans. Some selkies enter into dalliances with humans, but all return to the sea within a year or so. Selkies in human form can be recognized by their webbed hands and slow breathing. They are experts in medicine and midwifery, and their half-human offspring inherit these gifts.

CHARACTERISTICS

MIGHT 6 BODY CONTROL 8 MAGIC 6
MANIPULATION 8 Fear 0

MAGICAL POWERS

- ❖ Enchant
- ❖ Curse
- ❖ Change shape: between seal and human
- ❖ Breathe underwater
- ❖ **MEDICINE:** treat a total of four Conditions instead of three



CONDITIONS

- ☐ Angry +2
- ☐ Afraid
- ☐ Dazed
- ☐ Bleeding -1
- ☐ Seductive +1
- ☐ Badly injured -2 (summons more selkies to help)
- ☐ Broken – Retreats to the sea and stays away for 1D6 days. Dies if the damage is physical. May curse the place or the person who dealt the most damage.

COMBAT

ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE
Bite, weapon	2	0

RITUAL

Selkies can be killed by anything that would kill a human.

SECRET

According to tradition, a girl can summon a selkie lover by sitting on a rock at high tide and letting seven tears fall into the sea.

Stealing and hiding a selkie's seal-skin forces them to remain on the shore, but they will return to the sea as soon as they can find it, even abandoning a human spouse and children.

Selkies and mermaids are allies, and may avenge wrongs done to each other.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS

- ❖ Storms have battered the fishing village of Lochannan for more than a week, keeping the fleet in harbor and the villagers indoors. Unknown to anyone else, one of the fishermen was overcome by greed and slew a gray seal, hoping to sell its skin, meat and blubber to make up for a shortfall in his catch. The seal was a selkie, and its angry relatives raised the storm in retribution.
- ❖ Fergus McLellan has cast out his wife and infant son, who was born with webbing between his fingers and toes. Drunk and swearing terrible things, he was last seen armed with his ancient musket and heading for a nearby inlet where seals congregate. Was his wife seduced by a selkie?
- ❖ Agnes Muir only intended to have some fun and make her boyfriend jealous when she followed the ancient ritual and summoned a selkie lover. She was last seen more than a week ago, sitting on a rock and staring out to sea. Her family fears she has been murdered, but others believe that her selkie lover has taken her to live with him under the sea.

VARIANTS

Although most Orkney trows are very similar to trolls, **sea trows** can take the shapes of seals and fish as well as their own hideous natural form. They steal fish from nets and lines, and occasionally play pranks on fishermen.

Roane are identical to selkies in most respects, but gentler. They avoid people who harm them rather than seeking revenge.

EXISTING VAESSEN

A number of creatures described in the *Vaesen* core rulebook have counterparts or relatives in Mythic Britain and Ireland. This is not altogether surprising, for international boundaries mean little to supernatural beings – and of course, the islands have many historical ties to Scandinavia. The Anglo-Saxons who created the nation of England came from Scandinavia and northern Germany, and four hundred years later the Viking Kingdom of Jorvik (known today as York) extended Danish rule over much of northern and eastern England. Danes and Norwegians settled in Scotland and Ireland, as well as the northern isles. They brought their language and their culture with them, as well as their *vaesen*.

The following pages look at those creatures from Mythic Britain and Ireland that are close counterparts of Scandinavian *vaesen*, and suggest some ways for adapting the creatures from the core rulebook into their English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish versions.

The following creatures from the *Vaesen* core rulebook are also found in Mythic Britain and Ireland, and can be used with no changes:

- ✦ CHURCH GRIM: almost always takes the form of a black dog, but its behavior makes it easy to distinguish from other black dogs (see page 56).
- ✦ FAIRY
- ✦ GHOST
- ✦ GIANT
- ✦ LINDWORM: usually called “worm” or “wurm”.
- ✦ MARE: also called “nightmare” or “hagge” – but not to be confused with true hags (see page 64).
- ✦ REVENANT
- ✦ SEA SERPENT
- ✦ WEREWOLF
- ✦ WILL-O’-THE-WISP

Several other *vaesen* from the core book have multiple counterparts in Mythic Britain and Ireland, and some adaptation is necessary to account for regional variations.

CHURCH GRIMS

Some believe that the first person buried in a new churchyard has the duty of protecting it from the Devil and his minions. To save a human soul from giving up their eternal rest for this task, the practice has arisen of burying an animal – usually a cat or a dog – in the north part of the churchyard as a substitute.

The church grim sometimes looks out from the bell tower, especially when a funeral is going on. It is said that by observing its demeanor closely, one can tell which way the deceased is headed in the afterlife.

BROOK HORSE

Water horse is the most common name for these creatures, rendered in Scots Gaelic as each *uisge*, in Irish as *aughisky*, and in Manx as *cabyll-ushtey*. They mostly live in or near salt water.

In their wild state, water horses prey on cattle that graze too close to the shores of the lakes and seas where they make their homes. Many are shapeshifters, able to take on the form of a fine horse, a pony, a handsome man, or a large water bird. A few can take the form of a fine bull.

As well as attacking cattle, water horses lure victims into touching them, whereupon they find themselves stuck fast and are carried into the water to be drowned and eaten.

Despite this, water horses can be tamed, and if broken they become the finest quality mounts imaginable. However, their owners must be careful to keep them well inland, for the slightest glimpse or smell of salt water causes their wild instincts to take over and they immediately carry their rider into the sea and eat them.

In a few stories, a water horse is driven off when a potential victim loads a gun with a silver coin or button and shoots the beast, after lead shot has had no effect. When killed, a water horse dissolves into a shapeless mass of jelly.

THE LANTERN MAN

The will-o'-the-wisps of the East Anglian fens are known as lantern men. They are drawn to the sound of whistling, but can be evaded by lying face down with one's face in the mud.

Kelpies are also found in Scotland, preferring rivers and streams to lakes and sea shores. They can be identified in their horse form by the fact that their hooves point backwards. Their human form can vary considerably, from a rough and shaggy man to a handsome one, or from a tall and hag-like woman to a beautiful nymph. If a halter marked with a cross can be put on a kelpie, it becomes a docile and hard-working beast of burden, and can breed with normal horses. The offspring have short ears, more like those of a bull than a horse, and are immune to drowning. Kelpies tend to be tricksters rather than predators, luring victims onto their backs and then taking them on a wild ride that ends with a dunking in a lake, although some tales tell of them being every bit as dangerous as water horses. This may be due to the fact that the two are very hard to tell apart by sight.

Ceffyl Dŵr is the Welsh version of the creature. It inhabits mountain pools and waterfalls, from which it rushes out to trample and eat unwary passers-by. It does not have any shapeshifting ability, but it can fly and evaporate into mist – both of which can be quite unfortunate for anyone riding on its back! In most stories, though, ceffyl dŵr are no more than tricksters, taking their victims for a wild ride before dumping them into a lake.

Nuggles are similar creatures native to the Shetland Islands. While they look like fine horses or Shetland ponies, their curled, wheel-like tails betray their true nature. All are male, and their coats range from a deep blue-gray to almost white. Like the ceffyl dŵr, they are tricksters rather than predators. In some parts

FAIRY HOUNDS

Although the Gaelic *cu sidhe* translates literally as 'fairy hound', its true meaning is 'supernatural hound'. These creatures are different from black dogs (see page 56) in that they are only encountered with other supernatural beings, usually as part of the Wild Hunt. They are large – the size of a yearling calf according to many sources – with white coats and red ears, except in the Highlands of Scotland where the local breed is dark green in color. While hunting, they never lose a scent and they are never slowed by rough terrain. In all other respects they count as hunting dogs.

of the islands they are called **shopiltee**. Local tradition holds that only a Finn can ride such a creature without coming to harm: throughout Scandinavia, the Finns have always been regarded as being magical.





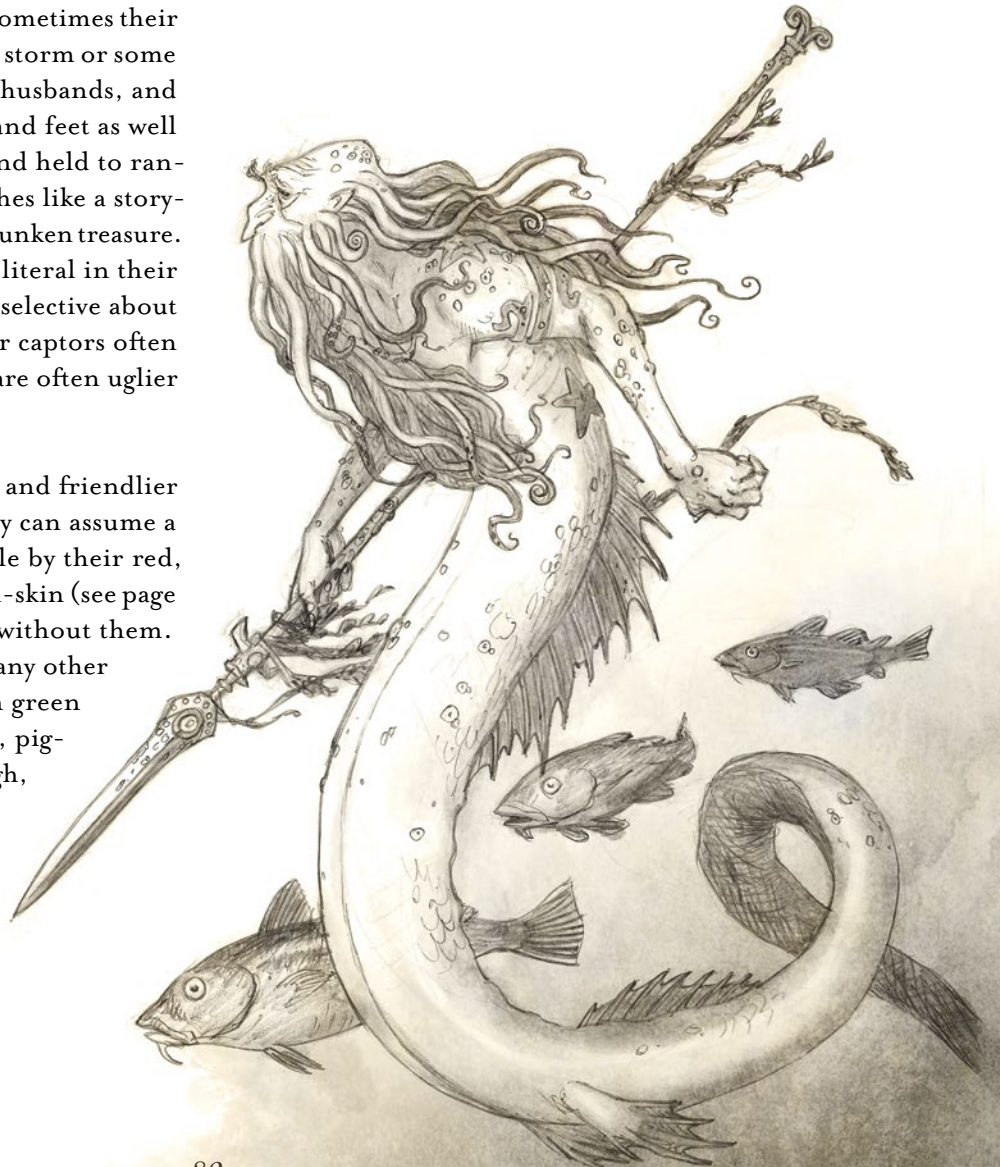
MERMAID

Mermaids, and sometimes mermen, can be found in the waters around these islands. Sometimes their appearance is a warning of a coming storm or some other disaster. Some marry human husbands, and their children have webbed hands and feet as well as great skill as healers. If caught and held to ransom, some mermaids can grant wishes like a story-book genie, or reveal the location of sunken treasure. Like a genie, though, they are very literal in their interpretation of a wish and highly selective about the information they reveal, so their captors often regret dealing with them. Mermen are often uglier and more violent than mermaids.

Merrows are Irish merfolk, gentler and friendlier than most other types. On land they can assume a human form but are distinguishable by their red, feathered caps. Just like a selkie's seal-skin (see page 78), they cannot return to the sea without them. Female merrows are as beautiful as any other mermaids, but males are ugly, with green skin, red, pointed noses, and small, pig-like eyes. Regardless of gender, though, merrows are jovial company. If they become friendly with a human, they can recover casks of wine and liquor from sunken ships and cause them to drift up to the shore near their friend's dwelling.

The **Blue Men of the Minch** inhabit a strait between the island of Lewis and the Scottish mainland. They live in underwater caves and cause storms to wreck passing ships. Unlike most merfolk they have human-looking legs. They can be defeated by a captain who is good at rhyming and can get the last word over them.

Asrai are found in the waters off north-west England, and in some lakes there. Some have a fish tail, while others have webbed feet. Their hair is green, and their skin is so cold that their touch burns. They cannot last more than an hour or two out of water, dissolving into a puddle of salt water.



NECK

Grindylows come from the English counties of Yorkshire and Lancashire. Unlike the musical neck they are stealthy creatures, seldom seen clearly, and have long, sinewy arms that reach out from beneath the water to grab and drown incautious children. Some have a hag-like appearance and feminine names, such as Peg Powler who lives in the River Tees and Jenny Greenteeth who haunts the area around Liverpool.

NISSE AND VAETTIR

Mythic Britain and Ireland are home to a large number of creatures that share the characteristics of nisse and Vaettir. They are known by various names according to the region and the part of the farm that is under their care.

Brownies are the most widespread domestic spirits in British lore. On the rare occasions that they let themselves be seen, they are about three feet tall, and either dressed in brown clothes or covered in brown fur. Like nissar, they leave a house if they are given a

gift of clothing. Some of them even leave if they hear a word of thanks. In Wales they are called bwca, and in Scotland bodach sabhaill (“little old man of the barn”) or grogach.

Hobgoblins are found in England, and have charge of the hearth. Unlike their fantasy counterparts (whose nature reflects the demonization of all supernatural creatures in Christian times) they are small and peaceful, though like all their kin they are capable of causing serious and even deadly “accidents” if they are offended.

Killmoulis live in the flour-mills of northern England and southern Scotland. They have no mouths, but use their long, pointed noses to snuffle up spilled flour.

TROLL

The **Fomorians** are one of the ancient peoples of Ireland. Defeated in distant antiquity, they hold on in bogs and other remote places, raiding farms and villages and kidnapping children to eat.

Trows seem to be Scandinavian trolls who moved to the Shetland islands with the Vikings in the early Middle Ages. They are extremely various: some are so big they are effectively giants, some have multiple heads, and others are more human-like. Most are nocturnal, either because sunlight turns them to stone or because they cannot return to their underground dwellings if they are above ground at sunrise.



Seven herring are a salmon's fill
 Seven salmon are a seal's fill
 Seven seals are a whale's fill
 And seven whales the fill of a Círeín Croin.

— TRADITIONAL RHYME FROM CAITHNESS, SCOTLAND



OLD MEG

THIS MYSTERY FOR *Vaesen* takes place in the rural west of England, where the old ways died hard and echoes of the pagan past are all around. It can equally well be set in Scandinavia, where there are similar traditions of hags and trollwives and of miracle-working saints.

While the cause of the mystery is not difficult to determine, the characters will find themselves faced with a powerful foe who is not at all easy to stop.

PRELUDE

This first section describes the background of the mystery and the conflicts on which it is based. There is an invitation to kick off the session, then the text proceeds to describe the journey to the fishing hamlet

Gloucester and Brancomb. The section concludes with a countdown of events which you as the Game-master will initiate at some appropriate time during the mystery – and a catastrophe that describes what happens if the player characters do not take action or fail in their efforts. But first we will look back at the events leading up to the mystery.

BACKGROUND

The western English county of Gloucestershire, like those around it, is rustic and comparatively backward. It is a place little changed since the Middle Ages, where the remains of prehistoric stone-work dot the landscape. Burial mounds are associated with the fairies, while stone circles and lone

standing stones are frequently given the names of legendary witches and hags.

One such stone is Old Meg, a tall and weathered lump of rock some two meters tall, that stands on a gorse-covered hillside overlooking the broad valley of the river Annon near the market town of Annonsbury. According to local legend, a nearby cave – called Old Meg’s Holt – was the lair of a dangerous pagan witch who terrorized the area in the 7th century before being defeated by the missionary Saint Birinus, who is known locally as St. Birren. Unable to resist the power of the saint, she turned to stone and has stood above the cave ever since.

Modern science disputes the legend, of course, and Old Meg has been recorded in many archaeological surveys of the area as a standing stone of Neolithic date, similar to many across the west of England and nearby Wales.

All was quiet until a month ago, when a plough-boy by the name of Billy Winchcombe broke the heart of young Daisy Thomas by squiring Jenny Pearce to the May Fair at the village of Brancomb. Daisy left the fair in tears of rage and humiliation, climbing the hillside and somehow finding herself beside Old Meg’s cave. Daisy slipped and fell outside the cave, hitting her head on the stone. Her blood freed the ancient hag from her imprisonment: she hungrily tore Daisy apart before setting out on a path of destruction across the countryside. Three days later, Daisy’s distraught father found his daughter’s mangled body just inside the mouth of the cave. A murder hunt was launched, and Billy Winchcombe was arrested on suspicion of killing his former sweetheart.

In the days that followed, the area was engulfed by unseasonal cold, and experienced the latest frost on record. Sheep were found mutilated and partially eaten. A late traveler was thrown into the River Annon from the Shaftington bridge, and lingers near death in the Annonsbury cottage hospital. Two children, out picking flowers for the church’s St. Birren’ Day display, ran from a “wicked, ugly lady” in the gathering dusk.

Edgar Longby, the curate of the church of St. Birren at Brancomb, has a keen interest in local folklore and archaeology, and while a student at Cambridge he corresponded with a member of the Society on the common elements of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian folklore. His morning walk took him past the cave, and he had intended to lay a posy of wildflowers at the spot where the unfortunate girl’s body was found. It was he who first noticed that the stone was missing. Reminded of the legend of Old Meg, he renewed his correspondence with his fellow folklorist (one of the Player Characters).

CONFLICTS

The main conflict in this mystery is that between tradition and reason. It is embodied in the character of Edgar Longby the curate, who sees all the signs of a legendary monster awaking but whose reason and education tell him that there must be some mundane explanation. As sheltered and backward as Annonsbury seems to the sophisticated eyes of visitors from London or Uppsala, it is still the nineteenth century, and even in this remote area most people scoff at superstition. Even those who retell the legends only half believe them.

IN THE MYTHIC NORTH

Other Mysteries for *Vaesin* are set mainly in the Mythic North, and you may decide that a long journey to rural England, with linguistic and other difficulties, is too much for the player characters. In that case, the setting may be changed to a rural area of southern Scandinavia, far from any city, where old superstitions linger and outsiders are regarded with suspicion. Many such areas have Neolithic standing stones, some with legends similar to the tale of Old Meg. Just change the names to appropriate Scandinavian counterparts, and you’re all set!

The secondary conflict is between the authorities in Annonsbury and the villagers of Brancomb. The law, led by Inspector Banks of the Gloucester Constabulary, regards the case as open and shut: at some time after the fair, Billy Winchcombe met Daisy Thomas near the cave. The two quarreled, and he killed her. The fact that almost everyone in Brancomb will swear to having seen Billy in and around the village during the three days between Daisy's disappearance and the discovery of her body is a mere inconvenience. Banks is convinced that he has his man, and that in time Billy will be persuaded to confess. As their young neighbor sits in the cells at Annonsbury's police station, the people of Brancomb are growing increasingly restless – not least because the authorities are taking no interest in the dead sheep and other strange occurrences.

A VERY BRITISH MYSTERY

Since this Mystery is set in England, you may prefer to play it with British investigators. The Society is a worldwide organization with branches across Europe. It has a major base in London, and it is quite possible that a smaller group operates out of the nearby city of Bristol.

British characters will face fewer cultural and linguistic difficulties than their Swedish counterparts, but there will still be some. Londoners will find the local Gloucestershire dialect nearly impenetrable, requiring a simple **LEARNING** test to understand what a Brancomb villager is saying, even though they are supposedly speaking the same language. In addition, anyone from outside Brancomb – even visitors from Bristol – will be regarded as an outsider, and face penalties to Empathy tests (see the box headed "Furriners") though these penalties will be less severe than those faced by non-English characters.

INVITATION

In early June, a letter arrives, addressed to Longby's former correspondent (*Handout 1A*). It reads as follows:

My dear friend,

I fear I have been remiss in failing to keep up our acquaintance. The correspondence of our student days was most enlightening – for me, and I dare hope that you found some diversion in it as well. I still dabble in local archaeology and folklore, and have read a little in the London newspapers about recent discoveries in your own country.

I wish I were writing now to renew our acquaintance and to propose further exchanges on such fascinating matters, but I have another purpose. Certain troubling events around the village where I serve as curate of the church reminded me of our discussions concerning the legends surrounding certain standing-stones and their connection in folklore with tales of witches, hags, and other trollfolk. More than that, a young woman is dead – horribly murdered – and her former suitor is in danger of hanging for the crime.

Since the unfortunate girl's body was found, our village has been in the grip of winter. Frosts as bitter as those of February blight the flowers of June, and some creature – perhaps a wolf, though none has been seen in these parts for four centuries at least – has been driven by the cold to prey on farmers' livestock. Other strange occurrences have added to the woes of the local people, and there is talk of a curse.

In our student days, you hinted at some knowledge, some resource, that you could bring to bear in unravelling mysteries of this nature. If you do indeed have it in your power to investigate our situation and bring the truth to light, then I beg you to do me the honour of visiting. My home is humble, but it is at your disposal.

I await your reply eagerly, and hope for the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance in person.

Sincerely yours,

Edgar Longby, M.A. (Cantab), Curate of the Parish of St. Birren, Brancomb, Nr. Annonsbury, Glos.

PREPARATIONS

As usual, the characters can prepare for the journey at their headquarters and thereby gain an Advantage.

Player characters who go looking for information about Annonsbury and Brancomb in Uppsala



will not find much, as both places are relatively small and unimportant. Annonsbury can be found on maps or in county directories as a small to medium sized market town with an unremarkable history. Brancomb is barely a spot on the map. The River Annon flows out of the surrounding hills, through Brancomb, and on through Annonsbury, eventually flowing into the Slimbridge marshes that adjoin the River Severn.

A successful **LEARNING** test allows a character to recall that hags are common in folklore, and the names of local hags are sometimes given to standing stones and other prehistoric remains.

THE JOURNEY

The journey to Brancomb from London involves a train to Bristol, and another train toward Gloucester, stopping at the small town of Annonsbury. Longby will meet them there, having engaged a private coach to take them and their luggage the final mile and a half to Brancomb. Player characters coming from Upsala will have to travel to Gothenburg and then take a ship to London or Bristol.

As the track winds upward toward Brancomb through the wooded hills, the player characters have about half an hour to talk with Longby and gain the following information:

- ✦ A local girl named Daisy Thomas was found dead near the entrance to a cave in the hills. Her body was horrifically mutilated, as if by a wild animal.
- ✦ A local youth named Billy Winchcombe has been arrested for Daisy's murder. He is said to have been her beau. Three days before her body was found, Daisy fled from Annonsbury's May Fair in visible distress after seeing Winchcombe in the company of another local girl. When she did not come home that evening a search party was organized.
- ✦ In the weeks since the girl's body was found, there have been sheep mutilations and attacks on night travelers in the area. The local people are afraid, and there are rumors of a ghost, or a curse.

EDGAR LONGBY

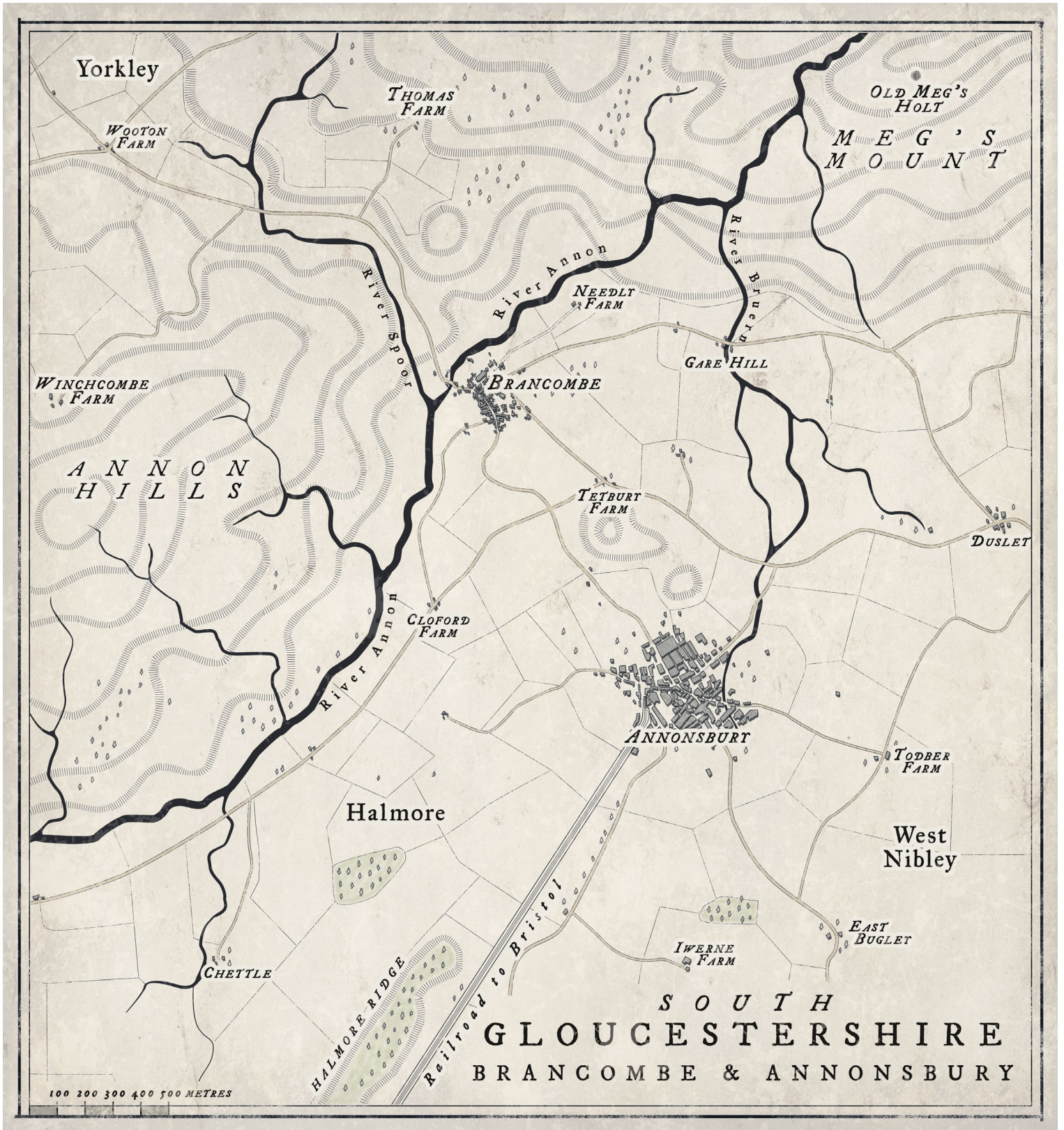
"It is all most peculiar."

Longby is a small and studious man of 27, but looks a decade older. This is partly because of his quiet and serious demeanor, and partly the result of a deliberate effort to seem mature and worthy of the respect of his parishioners. His sandy hair is always neatly brushed, and his blue eyes are watery and pale behind his wire-framed glasses. He wears a dark suit with the dog-collar of a clergyman.

He feels a strong sense of duty, but lacks self-confidence, especially in social situations. However, he will back the player characters fully in their efforts to solve the mystery that threatens his parish – though he will much prefer a scientific explanation to a supernatural one.

- ✦ **Physique 2 Precision 3**
Logic 3 Empathy 4
- ✦ **AGILITY 2 INSPIRATION 4 MANIPULATION 2**
- ✦ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1**
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Shotgun, vestments, crucifix

- ✦ There is also rising tension between the villagers of Brancomb and the police at Annonsbury, where Winchcombe is being held. The locals are convinced that he could not have committed the murder, but the police refuse to listen.



ARRIVAL

Brancomb is a tiny village nestled in a fold of the hills. There is an inn, a church, the vicarage where Longby resides, a water mill beside the stone bridge over the River Annon, and not much else. If asked, Longby will explain that most of his parishioners farm sheep in the surrounding hills and go to Annonbury for its market and other services.

Just before they enter the village, Longby points to a hill behind the church. Known locally as Meg's Mount, it is the site of the cave near which the girl's body was found.

The coach stops at the door of the vicarage, where three guest rooms have been prepared for the player characters. The rooms are not large, and can accommodate two people each. The village inn, the Shepherd's Rest, has two more rooms, and if more accommodations are necessary Longby will offer to put the player characters up at the inn at his own expense.

It is getting dark by the time the player characters reach Brancomb, and Longby offers them dinner at the vicarage. They are probably exhausted after their journey, and Longby suggests that they begin their investigation in the morning.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE MYSTERY

- ◆ **EDGAR LONGBY:** The curate of the parish, and an acquaintance of the player characters. He introduces them to the mystery, and can provide introductions to the locals.
- ◆ **TOM PAWSEY:** A local farmer and poacher.
- ◆ **OLD GAFFER INGHAM:** A fount of local lore.
- ◆ **INSPECTOR ROBERT BANKS:** A level-headed police officer who is certain that he got his man.
- ◆ **DOCTOR CUTHBERT MELLORS:** The local physician, who is perplexed by the evidence.

FURRINERS

The following is completely optional, and is recommended only for players who enjoy a challenge when interacting with NPCs. The Gamemaster should feel free to adjust the difficulty levels given below, or disregard this whole box, according to the preferences of the gaming group.

The people of rural Gloucestershire speak a thick dialect that can be difficult even for native English speakers to understand. They are distrustful of outsiders (which means, anyone born more than a mile from the center of the village), and doubly distrustful of foreigners – or "furriners," as they call them. Even Longby, who has served the parish for almost five years, is regarded as an outsider, and the locals watch what they say in his presence. Longby will accompany the player characters as much as he can, making introductions and acting as interpreter. He speaks no Swedish, but he is familiar enough with the local dialect to render it into a better form of English.

This can be handled in several ways, depending on how much of a challenge you want to present to the players.

The easiest option is to require a simple **LEARNING** test whenever a player character tries to talk to a new NPC. The thick local dialect may impose a penalty on the test if desired. The severity of the penalty is at the GM's discretion. If Longby is present, he can "translate" the local dialect into his own, more educated form of English. At the GM's option, this may reduce the penalty or even remove the need for a **LEARNING** test altogether.

In addition, all Empathy tests are made with a penalty (again, at the GM's discretion) because the player characters are outsiders, and "furriners" to boot. This penalty may be reduced or even removed when Longby is present, since the locals respect him.

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

The player characters' arrival in Brancomb with Longby, and their investigation into Daisy's death, will lead to reactions from the locals. Unless the player characters steer events in a different direction, the monstrous hag will continue her rampage and the conflict between the locals and the police will end in disaster. The following events can be used when necessary to prevent the pace of the game from flagging, and to push the players toward the final confrontation.

SIGNS AND PORTENTS

Old Meg's trail is marked by cold weather and frost damage, as noted above. Optionally the Gamemaster may wish to add some more enchantment effects to stoke up the fear and tension. Here are some examples: feel free to use whichever will work best in the campaign, or to devise others.

- ✦ Water and other liquids inexplicably freeze in their vessels, even indoors.
- ✦ Stored food – even food kept indoors – blackens and rots as if from extreme cold.
- ✦ Animals suddenly become terrified, struggling against halters and kicking barn doors in an effort to tear themselves away and escape.
- ✦ In addition to the frost damage in the hag's path, localized patches of snow and hailstones are found, drifting several feet deep.
- ✦ The wind carries unholy words in an unknown language – the hag's prayers to ancient gods. While no one living can understand their meaning, something about their sound strikes fear into all who hear them.
- ✦ All NPCs, and perhaps some player characters, suffer from nightmares, screaming in their sleep and waking up drenched in sweat amid a tangle of sheets.

COUNTDOWN

1. A distraught mother rushes into the village, screaming that her child was taken from the house during the previous night. The window above the child's bed was torn from its frame and the child pulled out through it. The villagers organize an armed search party and invite the player characters to join them. Their response to the invitation will result in further Empathy modifiers. A successful search leads to the discovery of the child's body, which is as badly mutilated as Daisy's corpse.
2. A brawl breaks out in the Shepherd's Rest one evening when members of the Winchcombe and Thomas families meet. Each blames the other for the situation, and harsh words are exchanged about the dead girl and the imprisoned youth. Bystanders intervene before things get out of hand and the Winchcombes return to their farm in a foul mood.
3. Four men, the father and brothers of Billy Winchcombe, come down into the village from their hill farm, armed with shotguns and agricultural implements. They ask Longby to come with them to Annonsbury to get Billy out of jail, and are ready to drag him there by force if necessary – and to free the young man by force if they have to.

CATASTROPHE

After weeks of roaming the surrounding countryside killing sheep and attacking lone travelers, Old Meg comes into the village one dark and moonless night. Seeing light and hearing sounds of merriment coming from the Shepherd's Rest, she bursts inside and lays about her in a blind fury, attacking whomever is nearest to her until she is stopped or forced to flee. The locals now know who is to blame for the attacks of the last several weeks, and probably for the death of young Daisy Thomas. Those who saw Daisy's body will attest that her wounds were very similar to those left by this monster. The villagers arm themselves and begin to patrol the outskirts, looking for any trace of the monster. Remembering the legend of Saint Birren, they implore Longby to cast the hag out

as the saint had done, or at the very least to send for “some clever, holy feller vrum Lunnun or Cambridge or such, as can do it iff’n the curate b’aint able hisself.” A full-blown monster hunt ensues, which the Annonsbury police ascribe to mass hysteria or bad drink. Determined to restore the Queen’s peace on their territory, they swear in temporary constables to swell their numbers and descend on the village in force, demanding the surrender of all weapons and imposing a dusk to dawn curfew. This results in a riot, and if the spiral is left unchecked reinforcements from Gloucester may be called in, backed up by troops from the city if necessary. If worse comes to worst, the whole village might be destroyed, and the villagers imprisoned or sent to the penal colony in Australia. Meanwhile, the hag will continue to stalk the night.

A PARALLEL COUNTDOWN

Even as the hag wanders the countryside causing more and more destruction, tensions are growing within the community; first between the Thomas and Winchcombe families and then between the people of Brancombe and the Police at Annonsbury. Events will unfold as follows unless the player characters step in.

1. Brawls break out between the younger Thomas and Winchcombe men whenever they meet. An early example is given in the description of the Shepherd’s Rest below, but the encounters escalate and drag in other villagers.
2. As the sheep killings and other phenomena continue, even the Thomases agree Daisy was killed by whatever is killing the sheep, and the two families reconcile. Representations are made to Constable Moore and then to the police at Annonsbury, but they fall on deaf ears. As far as the police are concerned, the murderer has been caught and there is no reason to re-open the investigation.
3. Frustrated and angry, villagers from Brancombe go to Annonsbury in increasing numbers, more determined each time to see Billy set free.

CATASTROPHE

A riot breaks out at Annonsbury as Brancombe folk try to force their way into the police station to free Billy. Violence is met with violence, and although the Annonsbury Police do not carry guns, heads are cracked and bones are broken. When order is restored, more villagers are in jail and facing trial.

CREATING ATMOSPHERE

The mystery surrounds the village with a constant menace. Read the following text or convey the same information to the players as the opportunity arises.

Brancomb is a village under siege, even if the enemy is unknown and unseen. Everyone is braced for more killings, but no one knows when or where they might take place. When they do, people speculate about where the killer might strike next, and whether it is a wild animal or something more frightening.

It is the uncertainty, more than anything else, that wears on everyone’s nerves. You can see it in faces and hear it in voices. There is no talk of anything else in the village, and raised voices turn to blows all too easily, especially in the Shepherd’s Rest.

There is also bitterness and a sense of betrayal. With Billy Winchcombe arrested, the police are taking no further interest in the matter, even though everyone but Daisy’s family admits that the evidence against him is flimsy. Are these fresh killings the work of the same hand? If so, they suggest that Billy is as innocent as he and his family maintain. But Annonsbury seems like another world, and the police there dismiss the people of Brancomb as ignorant yokels. Meanwhile, everyone waits. Where will the next killing be, and when? What is causing the strange blight of the crops nearby? And how long will it be before another human life is lost?



LOCATIONS

The following locations are marked on the maps of Brancomb and Annonbury. The most important of them are the vicarage, the Shepherd's Rest, Old Meg's Holt, and the Annonbury Police Station. If the characters wish to investigate other locations, you are free to improvise, but it is perfectly alright to simply explain that the place in question is not part of the mystery and that there is nothing for them there.

THE VICARAGE

The vicarage is a boxy, two-story building with white-washed walls and a slate roof. On the lower floor are Longby's office/library, a front parlor, and a kitchen and scullery. Upstairs are four bedrooms, one of which is used by Longby. Behind the house is a yard with a well and an outhouse.

CHALLENGES

The vicarage will be the characters' base of operations. Here are some suggestions for events and challenges.

- ♦ Longby has an extensive library, which contains some useful information (see "Clues" below). However, it is not well organized (for anyone except Longby, who can put his hand on any book almost immediately), and any player character trying to use it for research must make a successful **INVESTIGATION** test to find each clue given below.
- ♦ Mary Hopper, a widow from the village, comes in to cook and clean for Longby and his guests. At first she will be as reticent as her neighbors, but given a successful **MANIPULATION** test (and some encouragement from Longby, if needed), she may warm to the player characters after a day or two, and be able to answer questions. Through her association with the educated curate, her rustic accent has softened somewhat, making her a little easier to understand than the other villagers. She can offer information on the people of the village (usually with the caveat "you didn't hear this from me, mind") as set out below.

TYPICAL VILLAGER

The following game statistics can be used for any NPC who does not have an individual entry in this section.

- ♦ **Physique 4 Precision 2**
Logic 2 Empathy 2
- ♦ **FORCE 2 AGILITY 2 LEARNING 1**
- ♦ **Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1**
- ♦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife, shovel, or pitchfork

- ♦ Mrs. Hopper is an inveterate gossip, and enjoys the attention of curious neighbors eager to pump her for information about Longby and his visitors. She overhears a great deal, and will actively try to eavesdrop on any conversation that sounds interesting. If the player characters wish to prevent her from overhearing, everyone involved in a conversation must make a **STEALTH** test. Alternatively, they may switch to Swedish or some other language that she does not understand. Longby does not understand Swedish, and Mrs. Hoppers will be offended if she thinks the player characters are trying to stop her from snooping. This will add one level of difficulty to all Empathy tests while talking to her until her hurt feelings can be soothed.

CLUES

- ♦ The legend of Saint Birren and Old Meg is recounted very briefly in *The History and Traditions of Gloucestershire*. While converting the pagan Anglo-Saxons of the area, the saint battled the evil witch and turned her to stone by the power of his prayers. The book says no more on the matter, although the player characters may hear a more complete telling of the legend from Old Gaffer Ingham at The Shepherd's Rest – if they can understand him.
- ♦ *The Monuments and Antiquities of Gloucestershire*, an archaeological survey of the county published about 20 years ago, includes a map of the cave and its surroundings with the location of the standing stone marked. The stone is described

as “...a single standing stone, about the height of a man, typical of those found in upland areas across England and Scotland and generally ascribed to the Neolithic era. No trace was found of any circle or other arrangement of stones, of which the stone might formerly have been a part.”

- ❖ Longby is compiling notes for a parish history that he intends to write, and among his documents are some maps of the area. These will help the player characters see where attacks have taken place, gaining a +2 bonus to **LEARNING** or **INVESTIGATION** rolls when the player characters are looking for a pattern or route that the creature is following: see “The Monster’s Path” below.
- ❖ Mrs. Hopper can tell the player characters that Daisy and Billy were a devoted couple. Everyone in the village expected that Billy would ask Daisy’s father for her hand the following spring, when he had made a little money from selling a small flock of sheep that his father had given him. She has no idea why Billy chose to go to the May fair with Jenny Pearce. It was rumored after the fact that the two had fallen out, but no one knows why. If the GM wants to muddy the waters, Mrs. Hopper might invent any details that she does not know.

THE MONSTER’S PATH

If the player characters collect enough information about the locations of the various attacks and the areas affected by the strange and unseasonable frosts, a successful **LEARNING** test will enable them to trace the monster’s path on a map. It starts at the Thomas farm, just below the hill where the cave is located, and continues across the neighboring Winchcombe farm, followed by a couple of others. Although the path is not straight enough to predict exactly where the creature will strike next, it does indicate a general route which is heading toward the river – and might end at the village itself.



MARY HOPPER

“Now, you didn’t hear this from me, mind.”

A stout and bustling widow in her early fifties, Mrs. Hopper (no one but her late husband called her Mary within living memory) “does” for the curate, handling all cooking, cleaning, and laundry at the vicarage. Her family is scattered, sons moved to Bristol and Gloucester in search of factory work and daughters married into families in neighboring farms and villages. She lives all alone in a small cottage in Brancomb, but her access to the curate – and now, her potential information on his strange visitors – gives her considerable status.

- ❖ Physique 4 Precision 3
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ❖ **FORCE 3 STEALTH 2 VIGILANCE 4**
- ❖ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 2
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Skillet (as club)

THE SHEPHERD'S REST

The village pub is built of the golden local limestone with a roof of stone shingles. There is a tap-room on the ground floor, with accommodation for the innkeeper and his family behind. The beer cellar is cut into the rock below the tap-room, with a barrel-hatch set into the floor behind the bar and a set of stairs leading up to the family's suite of rooms.

Upstairs there are four rooms: two are available as guest rooms, and the other two have been given over to storage since the village rarely sees any visitors. The storage rooms are piled high with miscellaneous junk: at the GM's option, a careful search of them may turn up some item that the player characters can use.

The beer in the Shepherd's Rest is typical of the area. Served at cellar temperature (which is only slightly below the temperature of the tap-room), it is mid-brown in color. Swedish characters will find it denser and a little sweeter than the beers they know from home. Also available is cider, which is cloudy and wickedly strong: about 10–12% alcohol. The inn has no wine (“no call fer furrin drinks ere’round ’ere”) and the only spirits consist of a half-empty bottle of Scotch whiskey and a quarter-full bottle of brandy. Neither has been opened in living memory, and no one knows what condition they are in.

The food in the inn is simple but hearty. Meat pies are sold on their own during the day, cold or heated. In the evening they are served hot as a meal with mashed potatoes, gravy, and boiled vegetables. The other option is the “ploughman's lunch,” which consists of a lump of local, Cheddar-style cheese, a lump of rough, gray-brown bread, home-made pickle, and fresh butter, accompanied by an apple or other fruit according to the season.

CHALLENGES

The inn provides the player characters' best opportunity to interact with the locals. They will be reluctant to talk to “furriners” at first, but Longby will try to help break the ice, and translate if necessary.

- ✦ Edward Moore, a constable from Annonsbury, enters the inn looking for Longby and his guests. He is more curious than anything else, but wants to know who the foreigners are and what their business is. A successful **MANIPULATION** or **INSPIRATION** test will soothe his concerns – not that he can express what they are, exactly, but some of the locals shoot him dirty looks and mutter under their breath. This provides an opportunity for the player characters to learn of the resentment that is building in the village following Billy Winchcombe's arrest.
- ✦ Two of the Winchcombe brothers, Tom and Martin, are in the inn, drinking heavily. They argue with Albert Bradley, the innkeeper, when he suggests that they go home and sleep it off, becoming loud and troublesome. Just at that moment, Daisy's father, Fred Thomas, comes into the inn. He is red-eyed, unshaven, and disheveled, clearly broken by the loss of his daughter and the shock of finding her mutilated body. The Winchcombe brothers turn on him angrily, accusing him of reporting Billy to the police and causing his arrest. Threats and accusations fly, along with slurs on the characters of both young people. A fight seems inevitable unless the player characters try to stop it. If they intervene, they will earn the gratitude of one side and the enmity of the other, and this will be reflected in further adjustments to any Empathy tests they make in dealing with them.
- ✦ Tom Pawsey, a local poacher, brings a sack full of rabbits to Albert the innkeeper. While he is well known in the village, he will try to avoid strangers, in case they are in league with the law or the local gamekeepers. Gaining his trust requires a difficult **MANIPULATION** test.
- ✦ Inquiring about the legend of St. Birren and Old Meg will see the player characters being referred to Old Gaffer Ingham, the oldest inhabitant for miles around. Whenever the Shepherd's Rest is open, he can be found in his chair at the back corner of the tap-room, smoking a clay pipe and nursing a tankard of ale.

CLUES

There is a great deal of information to be gained at the inn:

- ❖ Fred Thomas breaks down if questioned about the state of his daughter's body, and any player character who is so insensitive as to ask him about it will have a hard time in future dealings with the locals. He was not alone, though, and both of the two men who were with him – Rob Watledge and Edwin Horsley – are regulars at the Shepherd's Rest. Either one can describe the state of the body ("Torn apart, it were – 'orrible sight. An' 'ard it be to say it, but I reckon not all of 'er were there. Some parts was ate, iff'n you ask me. I'd swear on the Bible no 'oomin done that – t'were an animal for sure. Bin centuries sin' a wooluf bin seen hereabouts, but 'ard to think what else could'a done such mischief"), though they will be careful not to speak of it in the presence of the grieving father.
- ❖ All of the villagers knew Daisy, and most will describe her as a pleasant, honest, and decent

young woman. If coaxed further, one or two might volunteer more ("She were moonish, if ye take my meanin' – full of old tales and such. She loved hearin' of the... good neighbors, is what we call 'em here – you know, I'm sure – and the like. She'd 'a bin 'ung fer a witch in the old days, but there were no 'arm in 'er, just what eddicated folk might call an overactive imagination"). Further successes will reveal that she often walked alone in the hills, and was fascinated with the legend of Old Meg.

- ❖ Likewise, everyone knows Billy, and no one can believe that he would be capable of such a violent crime. He could be high-spirited at times, like any youth, but there was never any malice in him and he was noted for his even temper. It is said that he adored Daisy, and according to one rumor Jenny was a cousin visiting from out of town – no one can quite say where – and Billy was doing his duty as a family member by showing her around the fair. It is said that he was visibly distressed when he saw Daisy run off.

ALBERT BRADLEY

"I reckon you've 'ad enough, boyo. I'd go home and sleep it off if I were you."

Bradley is a tall, broad man in his early fifties, with a jolly, round face framed by mutton-chop whiskers. He runs the Shepherd's Rest with a firm but jovial hand, but he keeps a shotgun under the bar in case of trouble.

- ❖ Physique 5 Precision 3
Logic 2 Empathy 3
- ❖ **FORCE 4 AGILITY 2 CLOSE COMBAT 3**
- ❖ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Shotgun

CONSTABLE EDWARD MOORE

"I'm not supposed to tell."

Moore is tall, slender, and dark, aged about twenty. He is a junior member of the Annonbury police, a little lacking in self-confidence but determined to do his duty – and to avoid the wrath of Inspector Banks as much as possible.

- ❖ Physique 4 Precision 4
Logic 2 Empathy 3
- ❖ **CLOSE COMBAT 2 RANGED COMBAT 2**
VIGILANCE 2
- ❖ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Truncheon (club)

- ♦ Tom Pawsey knows the surrounding countryside well, and for a couple of shillings he will guide the player characters to the cave and any surrounding farms if they can win his trust. He can supply the same information on the sheep attacks as anyone at the Winchcombe or Thomas farms. If he can be persuaded to accompany the characters to a kill site, or to the cave, he will admit that he has never seen tracks like those the characters find there. He knows every kind of animal that lives in the area, and these tracks belong to none of them. If the characters have not already realized that the tracks are human-like but for their long claws Tom will give them this information, confessing that he has never seen the like before.
- ♦ Old Gaffer Ingham can tell a more detailed version of the legend. His account adds the details that Old Meg was not a mortal witch but some kind of monster; that the Anglo-Saxons (whom he calls “the old-time folk”) used to leave offerings of livestock by her cave – and sometimes condemned criminals – to propitiate her; that St. Birren



TOM AND MARTIN WINCHCOMBE

“It ain’t right, that’s all. We won’t stand for it!”

Tall and rangy with tangled blond hair and blue eyes, Tom and Martin are clearly brothers. They are stronger than their slim build would suggest, thanks to a lifetime spent on the farm. Convinced that their cause is just, they will stand up to anyone and apologize to no one.

- ♦ Physique 4 Precision 2
Logic 2 Empathy 3
- ♦ **FORCE 2 CLOSE COMBAT 4 STEALTH 2**
- ♦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ♦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife

TOM PAWSEY

“I might know summat. What’s it worth to yer?”

Tom is small and slender, with dark eyes and a tangled mop of black hair. His eyes have a watchful quality about them, and he has the disconcerting ability to leave a room without anyone seeing him go. His voice is soft but clear, but he speaks only when he must.

- ♦ Physique 3 Precision 4
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ♦ **AGILITY 2 STEALTH 3 RANGED COMBAT 3**
- ♦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ♦ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife, shotgun, 4 wire snares



OLD GAFFER INGHAM

“This was afore you were born, but I ’member it clear enough.”

The Gaffer is the village’s oldest living inhabitant, though no one – not even the Gaffer himself – knows his true age. He can talk with authority on almost everything concerning the village, its history, and its folklore, as long as the drink keeps flowing. When he does not know the answer to a question he is likely to make something up, and it will always sound convincing.

- ❖ **Physique 4 Precision 4**
Logic 2 Empathy 2
- ❖ **FORCE 3 VIGILANCE 2 MANIPULATION 3**
- ❖ **Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1**
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Pocket knife

vanquished her with a cudgel he had blessed; that her “old-time” name was Mog and some say she was a sister to Morgan le Fay of King Arthur’s time; and that she can’t be killed, only driven back into her stone form. This is a major clue, letting the player characters know that a blessed weapon is required to defeat the hag.

- ❖ If the characters ask, Old Gaffer Ingham might also reveal that he had been talking to Daisy about the legend of Old Meg, and that she had been fascinated by it. She confided in him once that she went up to the cave from time to time to think, and that she felt a connection to the witch of legend. “No monster in her mind, she said – more a woman who wouldn’t bend the knee to men, she thought. She ’ad some right modern ideas in that direction, did young Daisy.” This clue established a link between Daisy and the cave, making it likely that she was there of her own free will when she met her death.
- ❖ General gossip in the inn tells of unseasonable frosts. They are later than any frost in memory, and seem very localized. An extra success (or a kindly GM) adds that these are the same areas where sheep have been found dead. This is a clue about the hag’s path, and if the player characters have already been to the cave or to the site of any sheep kill they will have seen the effects for themselves. Old Gaffer Ingham or some other local can recall that the legend of Old Meg includes the words “winter comes behind her.”
- ❖ Some farmers have found sheep savaged to death by some large wild creature. They are torn apart, with meat ripped from their carcasses and bones smashed. The largest local predators are foxes, and they are not capable of such destruction. An extra success (or a kindly GM) adds that the ground around them shows signs of a severe and unseasonable frost.

THE THOMAS FARM

The Thomas farm sits at the foot of the hill below Old Meg's Holt. It consists of a small stone farmhouse, a timber barn on a stone foundation, and a fenced sheepfold, all surrounded by a low stone wall. The farmhouse is little bigger than a cottage. The family is headed by Fred Thomas. His wife Emma died two years ago, leaving him and Daisy alone. Also on the farm are two hired hands, Rob Watledge and Edwin Horsley. Both are in their early twenties.

CHALLENGES

- ◆ Nothing can be done here unless the player characters have gained the trust of those on the farm. They have one opportunity to do this in the Shepherd's Rest (see above). If they supported Fred Thomas, no test is necessary. If they stepped in on the Winchcombe side, all Empathy tests at the Thomas farm will be one step more difficult than usual. Otherwise, an **MANIPULATION** test must be made as normal.

CLUES

- ◆ Fred is beside himself with grief, and hardly knows what to make of his daughter's fate. Between sobs, he will say that he liked Billy, and would not have believed him capable of such a brutal attack. On the other hand, the police told him that Billy is their only suspect.
- ◆ A guide from the farm will be needed to lead the player characters to the site of a sheep mutilation on Thomas land. The attack took place several days ago, and the carcass has been burned on the spot. If asked why, anyone from the farm will explain that the dead sheep could not have been left there for fear of encouraging foxes and other pests. Also, since no one knows what killed it, there is the risk of disease to be considered. Examining the site will require an **INVESTIGATION** test, because there is a great deal of disturbance including the ash and blackening of the fire and the prints of farmers' boots all around. However, a successful test will reveal one or two anomalous tracks. They

look like the prints of bare human feet, but are slightly distorted. Any extra successes will allow a character to characterize the distortions as coming from unusually long toes with claw-like nails. If the player characters have already seen tracks at the cave or at the site of another sheep kill, they find these tracks are identical.

- ◆ The area around the attack site shows an unusual and localized blackening of the grass and other vegetation. Any extra successes will lead to the further conclusion that the blackening looks like frost damage. The blackening is not restricted to the attack site, but continues away from it in two directions, in a swathe about six feet (2 m) wide. Following the trail will lead to the discovery of more footprints, and allow a character to determine that the creature that left the footprints was moving more or less away from the hill and the Thomas farm.

FRED THOMAS

"I just want my little girl back. She never done no 'arm to nobody!"

Fred is in his late forties, with dark, curly hair starting to go gray at the temples and a straggly mustache. He is strong like all farmers, but is starting to go soft around the middle. Daisy's death has completely broken him, leaving him distracted and prone to breaking down in tears at the slightest stress.

- ◆ **Physique 4 Precision 3**
Logic 2 Empathy 3
- ◆ **FORCE 4 CLOSE COMBAT 4 VIGILANCE 2**
- ◆ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Knife

THE WINCHCOMBE FARM

The Winchcombe farm sits across the river from the Thomas farm, and is very similar. The family is headed by David and Matilda Winchcombe. Also on the farm are their sons Tom and Martin, both in their late teens, and their daughter Anne, who is twelve.

CHALLENGES

- ❖ Nothing can be done here unless the player characters have gained the trust of the Winchcombe family. They have one opportunity to do this in the Shepherd's Rest (see above). If they supported the Winchcombe brothers, no Empathy test is necessary. Otherwise, an Empathy test must be made as normal.
- ❖ The heads of the family, David and Matilda Winchcombe, flatly deny all accusations against Billy, and expect the rest of the family to do the same. While they are present, no one will volunteer any information. Instead, they simply back up everything their parents say. A further Empathy test – and some ingenuity – will be required to get one of the younger Winchcombes alone and persuade him or her. Anne will be the hardest to talk to privately, since the rest of the family are very suspicious of any stranger's intentions toward her.

CLUES

- ❖ A guide from the farm can lead the player characters to the site of a sheep killing on Winchcombe land. The site is just as described above for the Thomas farm, including the blackening of the grass.
- ❖ Talking to the Winchcombes about the sheep attack will reveal that it took place the night after the attack on the Thomas family's sheep.
- ❖ If any character succeeds in talking to Anne Winchcombe alone, a further Empathy test is required to persuade her to open up. She will confirm that Billy and Daisy were a

loving couple, with dreams of marrying in a year or two. They will also confirm that Jenny Pearce is a distant cousin, and that Billy was eager to smooth over the misunderstanding with Daisy.

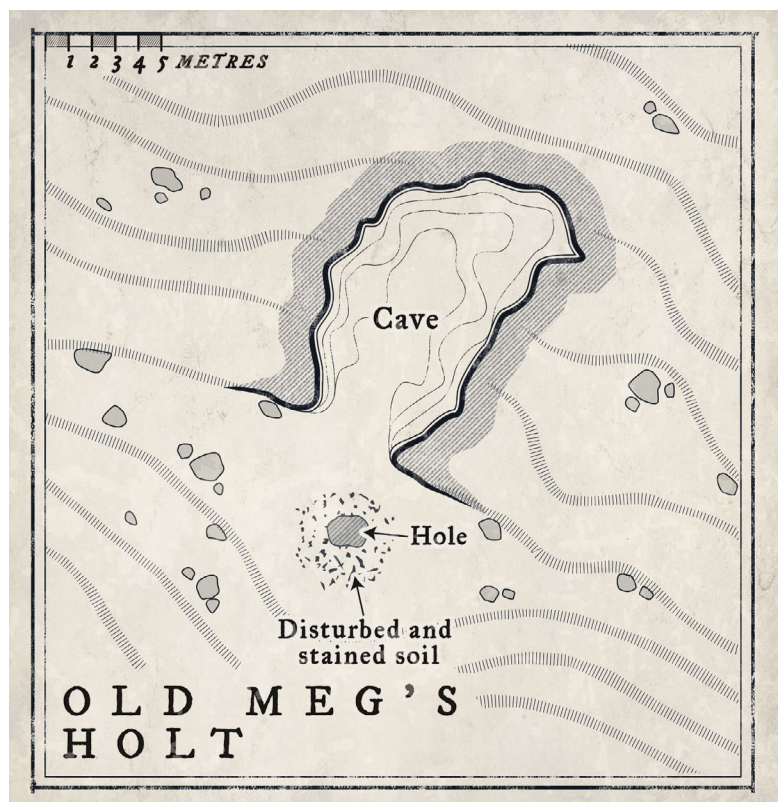
- ❖ A guide from the farm will be able to lead the characters to the site where a sheep was killed. The clues there are identical to those found on the Thomas farm (see above).

THE CAVE

Old Meg's Holt is a small cave in the side of a crag overlooking the Thomas farm. Its roof varies from about 6 feet/2 meters to 3 feet/1 meter high; it is about 24 feet/8 meters deep and 12 feet/4 meters wide. The floor consists of compacted dirt. The cave itself is empty, and the floor does not seem to have been disturbed recently.

CHALLENGES

- ❖ A normal **INVESTIGATION** test can be made inside the cave if any character wishes to search for clues there, but nothing will be found.
- ❖ Outside the cave, a normal **INVESTIGATION** test will allow a character to find the place where the stone once stood, and to examine the area around it.



CLUES

- ✦ Outside the cave mouth is what looks like a freshly-dug hole, about 3 feet/1 meter in diameter and 18 inches/50 cm deep. The soil around it is churned up, and a few footprints may be found. Most are the prints of bare feet with long, clawed toes, like those at the attack sites on the Thomas and Winchcombe farms. A few, mostly at the edge of the disturbed area, were made by Fred Thomas and his companions when they came upon Daisy's body. If the player characters have already found clues about the standing stone and the legend of Old Meg, they will realize that the stone is missing, and they may begin to wonder how a prehistoric standing stone weighing at least four tons can simply disappear.
- ✦ Close by the hole is a patch of dark soil, surrounded by many boot-prints. A **MEDICINE** test is required to identify the stain positively as blood, but anyone local will confirm that this is the spot where Daisy's body was found.

ANNONSBURY POLICE STATION

Annonbury police station stands close to the center of the small town, with the post office on one side and a bank on the other. All three buildings are made of the local yellow sandstone, which has weathered to a pale gray. Inside, the characters find a wooden counter manned by Sergeant Jack Worrell, who asks their business. Inside are various small offices and a narrow corridor with cells on either side: six in total.

CHALLENGES

- ✦ Getting to visit Billy Winchcombe requires some work. The sergeant will refer the visitors to Detective Inspector Robert Banks, who is in charge of the case. A, challenging **MANIPULATION** test is required before Moore will deign to speak to the characters. If they met Constable Edward Moore in the Shepherd's Rest, he can shift the difficulty of the test by one step in either direction, depending on whether they made a good or bad impression on him. One step easier than normal is an automatic success.
- ✦ Inspector Banks is reluctant to discuss the case, especially with a group of outsiders who have no official standing. He has already seen off a couple of journalists who were sniffing around for details of the grisly murder. If the characters present him with everything they have found, they must make a difficult Empathy test before he will tell them anything. If this test is failed, Banks will decide that they are interfering amateur detectives and order them out of the police station, calling several large policemen to enforce his command if necessary. If the characters make any mention of the supernatural, the difficulty of the test rises from difficult to impossible.
- ✦ In addition to Worell and Banks, there may be three to five constables in the police station at any time. Successful **MANIPULATION** tests may elicit some basic information from them. However, they are all reluctant to tell outsiders too much, for fear of getting into trouble with Banks. Therefore, each successive **MANIPULATION** test is one level more difficult than the one before.

CLUES

- ✦ Billy Winchcombe is sitting in one of the cells awaiting trial. This will be at least a week away, as Inspector Banks is still collecting evidence and preparing his case. Once Billy is convinced that the characters believe in his innocence, he will tell them that he and Daisy were in love and planned to marry, that Jenny was a visiting cousin and Daisy misunderstood the situation, and that plenty of people saw him at the fair that afternoon. The characters will probably have heard all this information before from people in the village.
- ✦ Everyone at the police station is aware of the case, and can tell the characters a few things: that a date for Billy's trial has not yet been set; that the investigation is being led by Inspector Banks; and that Daisy's body was examined by Doctor Mellors, a local physician.



INSPECTOR ROBERT BANKS

“This is police matter, and everything is well in hand. Good day to you.”

On the surface, the stocky, red-haired Banks is a plain-spoken and confident leader. Underneath, he is horrified by the ferocity of Daisy’s murder and feels pressure to close the case as quickly as possible. This makes him resistant to any suggestion that does not fit with his theory that Billy Winchcombe is the killer.

- ✦ Physique 4 Precision 3
Logic 3 Empathy 4
- ✦ **RANGED COMBAT 1 INVESTIGATION 3
VIGILANCE 2**
- ✦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Pistol

ANNONSBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY

This gothic-revival red-brick building stands not far from the police station in the center of Annonbury.

CHALLENGES

- ✦ The player characters can consult the local history collection, and find the clues below. The Gamemaster may require a successful **LEARNING** test if desired.

CLUES

- ✦ An early volume of the annual transactions of the local historical and archaeological society includes some notes reprinted from the works of the antiquarian William Stukely, who visited the area in 1721. Stukeley mentions a cave known locally as “Old Meg’s Holt” and notes that the name “Old Meg” refers to “an antient Standing Stone nearby, which local Tradition holds to be the body of a terrible Witch, turn’d to Stone by the intervention of a Saint in the Saxon age, who was engaged in converting the local Population.” This is a clue that something supernatural is at work.

SERGEANT JACK WORRELL

“The Inspector’s busy with a murder. What’s your business?”

Worrell is a tall and well-built man in his early fifties, with pale hair turning gray and pale blue eyes. He has an open face and an honest demeanor, but has learned that Inspector Banks does not take kindly to interruptions, or to casual inquirers.

- ✦ Physique 4 Precision 3
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ✦ **CLOSE COMBAT 3 INVESTIGATION 2
OBSERVATION 2**
- ✦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Truncheon (club)

- ◆ If the player characters have not yet realized that blessed weapons are needed to defeat the hag, they can find a box of notes at the back of a shelf, comprising an incomplete work on the life of Saint Birinus by 18th-century clergyman. The section describing his encounter with the witch quotes a 13th-century manuscript the author uncovered – he does not say where – which reads “He blessed hys staff and laved it in holy water, dedicating it in ye Almighty’s Name to the task ahead.”

DOCTOR MELLORS

Doctor Mellors maintains a surgery in a large house on the edge of the town. He lives on the upper floor of the building.

CHALLENGES

- ◆ Like Inspector Banks, Doctor Mellors will be hard to talk to. He will refuse to see the player characters unless one of them is a physician. Failing that they can convince him that their interest in the case is legitimate and respectable by making a successful **MANIPULATION** test.

CLUES

- ◆ Daisy’s body has been buried and is not available for examination, but Dr. Mellors can be persuaded to let the characters see the notes from his post mortem examination, as well as a copy of the report that he sent to Inspector Banks. His conclusion was that Daisy was attacked by a large and vicious animal, possibly a bear. The only problem with this theory is that bears are thought to have been hunted to extinction in the Middle Ages. None the less, Mellors insists that the wounds on Daisy’s body were caused by a powerful creature with long claws. He also found that several internal organs were missing, apparently eaten.
- ◆ If the characters win his confidence, Mellors will express his frustration with the Annonbury police. He is especially frustrated with Inspector Banks, who dismissed his theories about a dangerous



DOCTOR CUTHBERT MELLORS

“The injuries are unlike any I have seen.”

Mellors is tall and dapper, with a neat gray mustache and gold-rimmed glasses. He is educated and cultured, and a keen observer of people. He is precise by nature, and does not like to have his time wasted. He can also be a snob, looking down on his less educated neighbors as coarse and common yokels.

- ◆ **Physique 3 Precision 4**
Logic 4 Empathy 3
- ◆ **MEDICINE 3 LEARNING 3 OBSERVATION 2**
- ◆ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Pistol, medical tools, doctor’s bag

animal on the loose and maintained the Billy Winchcombe somehow caused the horrific injuries, perhaps with some kind of agricultural implement. Mellors turns red in the face and splutters with rage when he describes the Inspector’s theory.

CONFRONTATION

The final showdown will probably take place on the outskirts of Brancomb, as Old Meg continues her path toward the village. If the characters are able to trace her course and intercept her, it may take place near one of the outlying farms. Otherwise, she will reach the village at some point, as described under “Countdown and Catastrophe” above.

THE HAG APPEARS

When the characters encounter Old Meg, the hag comes striding out of the mist, holding her gnarled staff in one hand. Her pace never varies, and she exhibits no sign of fear or aggression. She is as relentless and uncaring as winter itself – until she strikes at a victim, which she can do with surprising speed.

BLESSED WEAPONS

By the time the player characters confront the hag, they should have picked up at least one clue that lets them know that they require blessed weapons to defeat her. As an ordained minister of the Church of

England, Longby has the ability to bless any weapons, although he has never done it before and he needs the assistance of a book from his library. Blessed weapons should be part of the player characters’ preparations for a confrontation, taking place once they have seen her path in the pattern of sheep kills and other incidents and before they set out to do battle. If things turn out differently and the player characters find themselves surprised in the vicarage, Longby can still bless their weapons as long as he is uninjured. Blessing a weapon requires holy water and a short prayer, taking about five minutes per weapon. In the case of firearms, the ammunition must be blessed rather than the gun itself. Five minutes suffices for blessing whatever ammunition one character has.

OLD MEG

Old Meg terrorized the area for decades before being defeated by St. Birren and forced to take refuge in her standing stone form. There she remained until the semi-coherent prayers of Daisy Thomas roused her from her slumber, helped considerably by the blood Daisy shed when she slipped and struck her head on the stone.

The hag is a blood-blind killing machine with no motive other than destruction. Any vestige of humanity she may once have possessed is gone, leaving only hatred for the mortals whose holy man imprisoned her and a hunger for flesh. Stats for Old Meg can be found on page 64 in this book.

MAGICAL POWERS

- ✦ **ENCHANTMENT:** Plants die. Frost follows in Old Meg’s footsteps, killing plants wherever she goes. It is possible to track her movements by following the trail of dead, frost-blackened vegetation.
- ✦ **CURSES:** Deadly cold. Old Meg radiates a zone of intense cold, and her attacks can freeze the flesh (see *Vaesen*, page 119).

CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE

Old Meg only moves by night. During the day, she finds a place to rest, turning into a standing stone with a thorn-bush (her staff) nearby. When she is on the move, she is surrounded by a zone of cold half a mile (800 meters) in diameter. Within this zone, low-hanging clouds hide the moon, creating near-total darkness. The temperature hovers around freezing, and frost blankets everything.

The hag’s approach is heralded by plummeting temperatures and sudden clouds. Frost builds up on windows, and the air grows unnaturally still. Sounds echo and lights seem dimmer than usual. A freezing mist springs up from the ground, leaving a silvery coating on everything it touches.

DEFEATING OLD MEG

If she is forced into a Broken condition, the hag sinks into the ground and escapes. She can be forced back into the form of a standing stone by defeating her using any kind of blessed weapon, just as St. Birren did. Longby knows how to bless a weapon in theory, although he has never actually done so. Alternatively, a priest character can perform the blessing. Rules for blessing are found on page 52 of the *Vaesen* rulebook.

AFTERMATH

The outcome of this Mystery will affect Brancomb and its surroundings deeply, according to how the characters manage things.

- ◆ If Old Meg is forced back into stone form, the characters – and those villagers who know the truth – face a choice. They can leave her in stone form, as St. Birren did, and hope no one else rediscovers the old rhyme that wakes her. They can research magical or spiritual means to keep her confined within the stone. They can devise some way to move her to a safer location – the bottom of the sea, perhaps – without arousing too much curiosity. They can try to break the stone up and scatter the pieces as widely as they can: this might kill the hag, or it might free her from the stone to defend herself.

- ◆ If the characters are defeated, Brancomb and its surrounding area develop an evil reputation. An eternal winter grips the area as people and livestock are killed almost nightly. Eventually the authorities in London send someone to investigate, and the government becomes involved, sending experts and troops to hunt for the supposed “wild beast” that is responsible for the destruction.
- ◆ Regardless of the outcome of the climactic battle, the fate of Billy Winchcombe still hangs in the balance. The best chance of securing his release is to engage a capable and respected barrister from London, and make a convincing case that Daisy was killed by a wild animal of some kind. Doctor Mellors will willingly testify in support of this theory, and it should be possible to secure Billy’s release. The Winchcombe family will forever be grateful for this, and the Thomas family can be persuaded to accept it, but Inspector Banks will never forgive the damage to his reputation. Any locals who have learned the truth of the matter will willingly go along with the characters as they promote the wild animal theory, since they know that the authorities would never accept the truth.

After everything is settled, the characters can return home and receive experience points for their part in resolving the Mystery. Page 25 of the *Vaesen* rulebook has guidelines for awarding experience.





THE LLANTYWYLL INCIDENT

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS travel to a mining village in Wales, where they must find some way to make peace between the spirits of the local mine and a zealous minister determined to rid the valley of its pagan superstitions.

PRELUDE

This first section describes the background of the mystery and the conflicts on which it is based. There is an invitation to kick off the session, then the text proceeds to describe the journey to Wales and Llantywyll. The section concludes with a countdown of events which you as the Gamemaster will initiate at some appropriate time during the mystery – and a

catastrophe that describes what happens if the player characters do not take action or fail in their efforts. But first we will look back at the events leading up to the mystery.

BACKGROUND

Llantywyll (pronounced *th'lan-tuh-whull*, approximately) is typical of the mining villages that are strung along the deep valleys of Wales. Some mine coal to power Britain's industry and others, like Llantywyll, mine slate to roof the houses of the expanding towns and cities. Like mines across Europe, the slate mine in Llantywyll is home to a community of knockers (page 66), known here by their Welsh name of *coblynau*.

Slate has been extracted from the valleys of north-west Wales since Roman times. Documents from 1415 mention a slate quarry at Llantywyll, and as the surface deposits were worked out the quarrymen followed the slate underground, becoming miners. Llantywyll slate was used locally for centuries, with small quantities making it down the valley and being shipped farther afield, but the arrival of the narrow-gauge railway in the 1840s and the demand for roofing-slates from the growing industrial cities led to boom times.

Like other slate and coal miners in Wales, the people of Llantywyll have long known of the *coblynau* in their mines, and have learned how to live and work in harmony with them. These days, most regard the various rules and prohibitions to be mere superstition, and speak of good and bad luck rather than supernatural neighbors, but whether they admit to believing the tales or not, no miner would be so reckless as to take anything marked with a cross underground, or to swear or whistle while working.

A little over a hundred years ago, Methodist preachers began establishing chapels across Wales, and as in many other areas, many people found this form of Christianity more to their liking than the official Anglican religion, which to many was little more than Catholicism with the monarch replacing the pope. The Methodist form of worship grew and spread, alongside other “nonconformist” religions including the Baptist and Congregationalist churches, and Wales remains one of its strongholds.

As the century progressed and more industrial practices were adopted, those who worked underground continued to respect the *coblynau*, knowingly or otherwise, with the result that the mine prospered and the village grew. Steam-powered winches pull carts of slate to the surface, where initial dressing is done by a steam-powered saw, but skilled workers are still needed to split the slate cleanly into the thin pieces used for roofing and other applications.

On Sundays, the valley rings with song as the miners attend chapel. The village also has a male-voice choir which has won a few local competitions, and

which practices in the chapel hall after Sunday services. In this and in every other way, Llantywyll is typical. But recently, a newcomer has been shaking things up in the village.

The Reverend John Wesley Griffith, named after a founder of the Methodist movement, was recently sent to Llantywyll to replace the recently deceased Reverend Daffydd Morgan, who had served the community for almost fifty years. Reverend Griffith is determined to make his mark, and has taken aim at the “pagan superstitions” he sees all around him in this remote village, especially in the mine. He was particularly offended to learn that the sign of the cross was prohibited in the mine, and for the last few Sundays he has preached a series of sermons attacking such practices.

Most of the younger miners regard his zeal as a harmless eccentricity, and when he announced his intention to conduct the following Sunday’s service in the mine rather than in the chapel, the older villagers found themselves in an uncomfortable situation. Even those who do not believe in the *coblynau* feel uncomfortable taking part in such a flagrant breach of age-old tradition, but at the same time the minister is a figure of such authority in the community that they do not feel they can refuse him, either.

Griffith led his congregation from the chapel to the mine in a solemn procession, though it was not as impressive a sight as he had hoped because a great number of his parishioners had stayed at home with a variety of ailments. At the mine gates they were greeted by Mrs. Myfanwy Thomas, the owner, with her family and servants, and together they all went into the mine. One of the larger chambers had been equipped with seats and a makeshift altar, and Griffith began to preach, once again, on his favorite topic of pagan superstitions.

Part-way through his sermon, the lanterns lighting the chamber began to flicker. A chill wind blew from no apparent source, stirring up dust that stung eyes and throats. Griffith never faltered, his voice rising above a series of creaks and groans from the surrounding rock that had experienced miners

looking around fearfully. Then, a part of the ceiling collapsed, trapping the Reverend and his flock underground.

Like all mining communities, Llantywyll had a volunteer rescue brigade, trained to respond to emergencies in the mine. Unfortunately, most of them were underground attending the service, rather than being on call between their mining shifts. Despite this, and with help from neighboring villages once the word spread, a passage was dug through the cave-in and those trapped in the mine were freed. By some miracle, no one was fatally injured. The minister came off worst, suffering a broken leg.

Since the accident, efforts have been made to reopen the mine, but without success. Those who have ventured inside to shore up the chamber and the shaft leading to it have encountered minor rockfalls and pockets of flammable gas. Once again there have been no serious injuries, but the mine remains closed and the village is facing financial ruin.

IN SWEDEN

The knockers and coblynau have relatives and counterparts all over Europe, and all over the world. The svartalfar of Norse tradition live underground and may become involved with mortal miners, or there may be a particular kind of nisse or vaettir who work in mines rather than in farms and houses. Alternatively, German mine spirits such as Meister Hämmerlinge may have occupied the mine, which is being worked by some of the many German immigrants who came from Lübeck and elsewhere to work in Sweden's mines.

The mine in this case is small, and in a fairly remote area. A small village has grown up around it.

CONFLICTS

The primary conflict in this mystery is between tradition and modern ways, as embodied in Griffith's determination to take Christianity into the mine and the consequences of offending the coblynau who dwell there. This is reflected as well in the less overt conflict between those who believe in the existence of the coblynau – or at least, in the wisdom of observing the superstitions.

The secondary conflict is between the miners and the mine owner. Mrs. Thomas is among those who would like to get rid of the old superstitions, as she believes they limit productivity and distract the miners from their work. She is wrong, but as a business owner in the growing industrial age she sees herself as bringing modern enlightenment to the remote and backward area.

Reverend Griffith is of the same mind, if for different reasons. While outwardly showing respect to these two pillars of the community, the people of Llantywyll quietly resent both of them: Thomas for her wealth, made off the labor of others, and Griffith for his lack of local knowledge and his contempt for their traditions. Even those who do not believe in the supernatural dislike the minister's criticism of their local practices, seeing within it a criticism of their community and themselves.

INVITATION

The invitation to visit Llantywyll (*Handout 2A*) comes from Dr. Evans, the local physician. She may be a contact of one of the player characters: an academic or doctor character may know her from their university days, an officer may have served with her in the army, or there may be some other connection. If not, she has become aware of the Society through a mutual friend, and writes to them at their London headquarters.

To whom it may concern (or My dear friend, depending on the circumstances),

Some recent events at the village of Llantywyll, where I practice medicine, have prompted me to write to you. Your particular expertise, and the resources of your Society, may be able to resolve an unfortunate series of events that, I can say without exaggeration, seem to threaten ruin to the local slate mine, and therefore to the whole of the village that depends on it.

I shall be brief here, in the hope of recounting the matter in greater detail face to face. The mine suffered a minor collapse on Sunday last, when the local minister was conducting a chapel service inside. His object was to disprove the local superstition that the cross, and the other signs of Christianity, brought bad luck to those who took them underground.

By some merciful Providence no lives were lost, and apart from a broken leg on the part of the minister, which I have set and which promises a good recovery, there were no serious injuries. The mine has remained closed ever since thanks to minor subsidences and reported pockets of gas. All efforts to shore up the damaged areas and resume operations have failed, leaving the future of the mine and the prosperity of the village in jeopardy.

Regular geological and engineering surveys, the most recent of which dates from last year, have always found the workings to be safe and stable, so the accident was most unexpected — except by those who pleaded a variety of minor illnesses that Sunday and avoided the service. I should add that without exception, they made remarkable recoveries, and were able to help in the rescue efforts that same afternoon. I am reminded of my school days, when unexplained stomach-aches kept certain of my classmates from attending lessons in the winter, but were unfailingly cured by the sound of the dinner-bell.

I have made some enquiries among the older locals regarding the superstition against the cross, but without success. No one denies that superstitions exist, but no one admits to knowing of them — to me, at least. So, as you can see, the matter seems to border on your particular area of expertise. For myself, I do not know what to believe, though certainly science denies such things. You may find there is some mundane explanation, if you agree to come, or perhaps you will find that there are indeed “more things in heaven and earth” as Hamlet told Horatio.

Please consider my invitation. My home will be at your disposal.

Very sincerely yours,
Dr. Janet Evans

PREPARATIONS

As usual, before leaving their headquarters, the player characters can prepare for the journey and gain an Advantage. For more information, see chapter 9 in the core rulebook.

Specific information on Llantywyll, beyond its name and location, is hard to come by. A newspaper clipping from a few years ago mentions the opening of the narrow-gauge railway up the valley, which stops at Llantywyll and other mining communities, and the player characters can form a general picture of the slate mining industry in Wales, as presented in the boxed text on page 110. They can also learn that the Llantywyll slate mine is owned by Mrs. Myfanwy Thomas, and has been profitable for the last several years. Finally, the *Times* reported on the disaster a few days ago (see *Handout 2B*).

WELSH MINE COLLAPSE

A roof collapsed at a slate mine in the village of Llantywyll in north Wales yesterday, trapping some 50 people including the local Methodist minister, a Mr. Griffith, who was conducting Sunday services in the mine. Rescue efforts were hampered by the fact that the members of the local rescue brigade were trapped underground with the other congregants.

Local people report that everyone was brought out with no loss of life and few injuries. Mrs. Myfanwy Thomas, the mine's owner, has arranged for a geological survey and additional shoring work as several smaller collapses have prevented the mine from returning to operation.

The *Times* understands that it is unusual for a minister to conduct services in a mine rather than in the village's Methodist chapel. Mr. Griffith is said to be under doctor's orders while he recovers from a broken leg, and has not as yet been able to shed any light on this question.

SLATE MINING IN WALES

Though Wales is more famous for its southern coalfields, slate mining has long been an important industry in the north-west of the country. Slate mining in the area dates back at least as far as the 1st century. In some places, slate is extracted from huge open quarries, and in others, including Llantwyll, the deposit is followed underground.

Slate mining was a small-scale affair until the early 19th century, when the combination of industrialization and the railways led to a boom in demand from the expanding cities, coupled with a quick and easy way to move the slate out of the steep valleys to waiting ports and railheads. The vast majority of Welsh slate is cut thin and used for roofing, but some thicker slabs are used to make flagstones and tombstones.

The industry has benefited from all the recent technological advances, such as steam-powered pumps and winding gear and gigantic quarry saws powered by steam or water, but one task must still be done by hand. No machine yet invented can split and trim slate for roofs as neatly as a skilled worker can.

The last leg of the journey is down a valley between gray-green hills, that gets narrower and darker as the track rises up into the mountains. Here and there, the valley sides are made steeper by huge piles of mining waste that look as though they might slide down onto the tracks at any moment. An overcast sky mirrors the color of the slate all around, making the whole world gray and adding to the cramped feeling. From time to time, the valley side recedes dramatically to reveal a large open quarry, where it seems as though a whole mountain has been pulled out like a tooth, leaving a vast bowl with stepped sides.

Villages pass by, long and thin within the valley's narrow confines and the same gray as the rest of the landscape. Each looks the same: a tiny station with a few baskets of flowers hung up to provide a jarring splash of color; a single, one-sided street facing the tracks with a shop and a chapel sandwiched between the rows of small, slate-roofed houses; and an abrupt end to the village as the train passes back into the steep-sided valley. The pattern repeats every few miles, seemingly without end.

Player characters who are familiar with English villages will notice a difference in their Welsh counterparts. Every village in England, however small, has at least one pub and usually more, only the larger villages here have any kind of hostelry, and seldom more than one. Clearly these Welsh mining folk are a sober bunch.

THE JOURNEY

The best way to reach Llantwyll is by train: from London's Euston station to Birmingham and on to Chester, then a change to the north Wales coastal line as far as Llandudno Junction, from which a narrow-gauge line winds inland, connecting the various mining villages with the sea. The journey can be accomplished in a day if the player characters read the train timetables well and have good luck with connections. If not, it may be necessary to stop for the night at Chester or Llandudno. Both towns have railway hotels close to their main stations.

ARRIVAL

If the player characters have sent a telegram ahead with their travel plans, Dr. Evans is waiting for them at Llantwyll's station. If not, the station master is able to give them clear directions to her home. The doctor welcomes them warmly, and shows them to the guest rooms her housekeeper has prepared for them, with an invitation to join her for tea once they have had a chance to wash and change.

In addition to what she wrote in her letter (*Handout 2A*), Dr. Evans can give the player characters the following information over tea and sandwiches:





DR. JANET EVANS

"I hope there is a scientific explanation, and you will tell me that I wasted your time by bringing you here. The alternative is rather too uncomfortable to contemplate."

The doctor was educated in London and Edinburgh but returned to her native north Wales after qualifying. While not an ardent Welsh nationalist, she is proud of Wales and its culture, and until the "accident," as she calls it, she found the local superstitions charming. The thought that the supernatural may be real disturbs her, but she is prepared to consider it in order to help her community.

A tall and unflappable woman in her middle thirties, her dark hair is sprinkled with gray and her eyes are dark brown.

- ❖ Physique 2 Precision 4
Logic 4 Empathy 3
- ❖ **MEDICINE 3 LEARNING 3 AGILITY 2**
- ❖ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Good quality clothes,
Doctor's bag

- ❖ Reverend Griffith arrived in Llantywyll a few months ago, as a replacement for the long-serving and much beloved Reverend Morgan. He trained in England and has a lot of new ideas, not all of which have gone down with the local community.
- ❖ He was conducting a service in the mine as a part of his drive to eliminate local superstitions, which he regards as pagan and unworthy of the modern age. One of these, to which he particularly objects, is the idea that it is unlucky to take a cross into the mine.
- ❖ Griffith sustained a broken tibia and fibia in the collapse, and Evans set the bones and put the leg in a plaster cast. Griffith is mostly confined to his home, but gets around on a pair of crutches, often against the doctor's advice that he keep the leg as still as possible until it has healed.
- ❖ The collapse happened at about 10:30 on Sunday morning. It made a rumble that was heard throughout the village, and when Evans arrived on the scene she was certain that there could be no survivors. It was after midnight when those trapped inside were freed, and she marvels that Griffith's was the only serious injury.
- ❖ Dr. Evans was not at the service because she had heard that an unusual number of people in the village were sick that Sunday, and she was waiting to hear where she was needed. In the end, no one contacted her, and it seems that a number of villagers feigned various ailments in order to avoid going to the service at the mine. Though they were clearly motivated by superstition, it was a good thing that not everyone was underground at the time of the collapse, for those left above ground were able to spread the alarm to the neighboring villages and begin the work of digging out their neighbors while help was on the way from outside.
- ❖ The mine's owner has brought in two mining engineers to assess the situation and assist with re-opening, but they have found that the mine is still dangerous.

- ♦ There is gossip in the village about the cause of the collapse. It tends to be cut short when people realize that Dr. Evans is within earshot, but she has been able to pick out the Welsh word “coblyn,” which she thinks refers to some kind of spirit.

Dr. Evans is willing to provide introductions to other people in the village, though she warns the player characters that not everyone will be willing to discuss their business with outsiders.

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

The coblynau have reacted to the Sunday service by deciding to close the mine to all mortals, and will resist all attempts to reopen the mine. Given Griffith’s determination to rid the village of its superstitions and Thomas’s drive to resume production, this will inevitably lead to trouble as the coblynau resort to increasingly stern measures in order to drive the mortals away. Unless the player characters can somehow make peace with the mine spirits, events will escalate until there is a serious loss of life. The following events can be used when necessary to prevent the pace of the game from flagging, and to push the players toward the final confrontation.

COUNTDOWN

1. Led by a mine engineer brought in from Cardiff, a group of workers begins shoring up the entrance to the mine. After less than half an hour they stagger from the workings amid a shower of dust and rock, coughing and spluttering. The last man out has a scalp wound which bleeds profusely, and he says that he saw the crew’s pit props fall, one by one, as if kicked by an invisible foot.
2. Dai Davies and a few of the older miners leave the pub late one night carrying a crate of ale and a basket of cakes. They head in the direction of

the mine, and if challenged they make up the lie that one of them has a birthday and they plan to have a little party. If left undisturbed, they venture as far into the mine as they dare, leaving the cakes and ale behind as a peace offering. Unfortunately, on the way out one of them barks his shin painfully on a rock, and lets out an expletive before he can control himself. The area behind them promptly collapses, showering the miners in flying rock chips that shred their clothes and take out the right eye of the transgressor.

3. With his Bible under his arm, Reverend Griffith hobbles down the street on his crutches, heading for the mine and calling upon everyone he encounters to come with him. He has no clear intention beyond going to the mine to sing and pray until he has made his point, and will not admit, even to himself, that he has come to regard the mine as hostile territory that must be reconquered. This time the coblynau are less patient, and if Griffith is not stopped there may be serious injuries and even deaths.

CATASTROPHE

Unless the player characters can stop him, Griffith will keep returning to the mine, more determined each time to show the villagers that their superstitions are groundless. Each time the coblynau respond more harshly, until the mine collapses completely, closing it for good. Alternatively, the player characters may decide to side with Reverend Griffith and try to force the coblynau out of the mine (see Confrontation). If they succeed, there is no more trouble in the mine, but the slate if yields becomes rotten and crumbles to the touch and the mine workings themselves become dangerous and prone to collapse. Locals like Dai Davies will observe that the coblynau took the mine’s luck with them when they left.



MRS. MYFANWY THOMAS

"That mine's sound, and always has been. I've brought engineers in from Cardiff. They'll get to the bottom of it."

Myfanwy Thomas – Missus Thomas to everyone local – lives in a large house overlooking the village. Her prosperity shows in her home and clothes, but she is a conscientious and compassionate woman who never forgets that she owes everything – as did her late husband – to the efforts of the mine's workers. She is eager to solve the mystery of the accident and get the mine working again, but as an educated industrialist she places her faith in the science of the hired engineers rather than in old tales about spirits in the mine.

Tall and slightly stout with a direct manner, Mrs. Thomas treats others like a kindly aunt or a stern head teacher, depending on her mood. She becomes increasingly frustrated as the closure of the mine costs her, and the village, more and more money. At first, she indulges the player characters in the hope that they will do something to placate the superstitious fears of the villagers, but unless they produce results within a day or two, she becomes impatient, going so far as to order them out of the village unless they mind their manners.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE MYSTERY

- ◆ **DOCTOR JANET EVANS:** The village doctor and a possible acquaintance of one of the player characters. She can provide information on important villagers and provide introductions.
- ◆ **REVEREND JOHN WESLEY GRIFFITH:** The minister at the Methodist chapel, and a fairly new arrival in the village. He is determined to stamp out what he sees as "heathen superstitions."
- ◆ **MYFANWY THOMAS:** The mine's owner and the most important person in the village. Her permission is needed to enter the mine.
- ◆ **DYLAN ROBERTS AND LEWIS MORGAN:** Mining engineers from Cardiff, brought in by Mrs. Thomas to make the mine safe and get it back into operation.
- ◆ **DAI DAVIES:** An old and respected miner and a fount of folklore and stories.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 4 Empathy 2
- ◆ **MANIPULATION 3 LEARNING 3 OBSERVATION 3**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Good quality clothes, silver-topped cane

TYPICAL VILLAGER

The following game statistics can be used for any NPC who does not have an individual entry in this section. Many villagers are employed by the mine, and are uncomfortable around strangers, but one or two are known jokers, willing to spin tales – true or false – for credulous visitors.

- ◆ Physique 4 Precision 2
Logic 2 Empathy 2
- ◆ **FORCE 2 AGILITY 2 LEARNING 1**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Working clothes and "Sunday best," tools

LOCATIONS

The following paragraphs summarize the most important locations that the player characters may visit as they investigate the mystery: the mine, the chapel, the local pub, and the village shop. If the player characters want to investigate other locations, you are free to improvise, but it is also perfectly acceptable to tell the players that the place in question is not part of the mystery and that there is nothing of interest there.

BETHEL CHAPEL

Standing close to the center of the village, the chapel is a plain, gray building of local stone, with a slate roof and arched windows. A small graveyard stands to one side, filled with neat rows of modest headstones.

The building is as austere inside as it is outside. Player characters from other faiths are struck by the lack of flowers, statues, stained glass windows, and other forms of decoration. The walls are plain white, and the only furnishings are rows of wooden pews, a simple altar flanked by a small pipe-organ and a plain pulpit, and a large wooden cross hanging on the back wall.

There is a good chance that the player characters will encounter one or more ladies from the village cleaning and polishing inside the chapel. They are reluctant to answer any inquiries, referring questions to the minister himself in his modest house next door to the chapel.

CHALLENGES

There is only one challenge to overcome at the chapel.

The ladies' reluctance to speak can be overcome by **MANIPULATION**, but it will not be easy. Minding one's own business and refusing to gossip is a virtue in this part of the world, and while they are never impolite, the ladies have an instinctive distrust of outsiders. Coupled with this is a tangled sense of embarrassment at the fact that the village suffered a disaster, that some still believe in cobylnau, that they cannot get wholeheartedly on board with the new minister's reforming zeal, and that, deep down, everyone feels that something has been disturbed that should have been left alone.

If any player character can navigate this complex web of reluctance successfully, the ladies may be induced to tell what they know, which is little, and give their opinions, which are perhaps stronger than they care to admit. It is quite possible that an informant will start to open up and then check herself, embarrassed to have been drawn out by a stranger with who knows what kind of motives.

CLUES

If they are successful in talking to the ladies at the chapel, the player characters can gain the following information. However, nothing can induce them to name names or point the player characters in the direction of specific villagers.

- ◆ Many in the village have been uncomfortable with the new minister. He was trained in England, and doesn't understand local people and their ways. He is young, of course, and may soften with time, but for now he puts people in an awkward position. It doesn't do to refuse the guidance of a minister, but at the same time people are attached to the ways things have been done since time immemorial.
- ◆ Of course there is no virtue in superstition, and some wild and wicked tales are told in the pub (or so the lady has heard, though she has never set foot in the place herself). Still, some of the older folk take the old stories seriously, and there has been talk that this new minister will bring bad luck to the village.

THE MINISTER'S HOUSE

The Reverend Griffith lives in a small house next door to the chapel. His housekeeper, Gladys Pugh, answers the door, her expression turning stern and forbidding as soon as she realizes the visitors are not from the village.

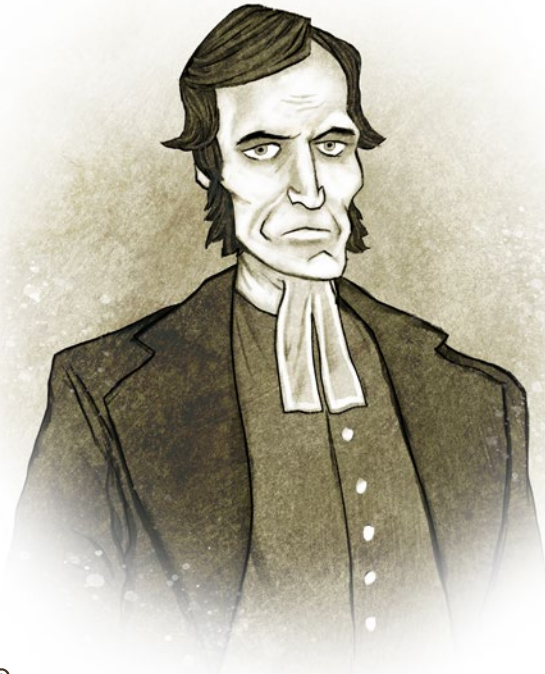
CHALLENGES

Below are a number of suggested challenges that the player characters may face at the minister's house.

- ✦ The first challenge will be to get past Mrs. Pugh and speak to Reverend Griffith. This will not be easy, as she has a fiercely protective nature, especially since Griffith is injured. If Dr. Evans is with the player characters and asks her to admit them, she gives in with ill-concealed impatience. Otherwise, a **MANIPULATION** roll is required. If the roll is failed, Mrs. Pugh refuses to let the player characters in, and all looks lost until Griffith comes stumping out of his office on crutches, demanding to know what is going on. This gives the player characters a chance to talk to him, and he is eager to accept so that he can put to rest all of the rumors and “superstitious nonsense,” as he puts it, that has arisen since the accident.
- ✦ Any mention of folklore or superstition – unless the speaker is careful to ridicule it – causes Griffith to reiterate even more forcefully his determination to rid the community of such notions. If he senses that the player characters themselves believe in the supernatural, he will bid them good day and ask them to leave. Mrs. Pugh is only too happy to see them to the door.

CLUES

- ✦ While the player characters are present, young Tom Jeffreys comes from the post office with a parcel wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. Mrs. Pugh takes it, commenting that the minister's old Bible was destroyed in the accident and that this is a replacement that he ordered. A successful **MANIPULATION** roll while asking about the Bible, induces her to say that the minister's old Bible was reduced to tatters, “just as though a cat had clawed it to pieces.” This clue confirms that something in the mine objects to Christianity, and suggests that it has an Enchantment power that causes Christian symbols to shatter.
- ✦ If the player characters ask Griffith how his leg came to be broken, a successful **MANIPULATION** roll makes him admit that he does not know. He was not standing anywhere near the rock fall that blocked the entrance, but he felt a heavy blow just below his knee at that moment and fell down.
- ✦ Any extra successes on a **MANIPULATION** roll when trying to raise the subject of local superstitions cause Griffith to mention some of the older miners – especially Dai Davies – who tell tall tales in the pub and turn the minds of the younger miners from faith and reason toward ignorance and superstition. Griffith will not go into detail on the nature of these superstition.
- ✦ If the conversation is steered in the right direction, Griffith will admit that he has faced some problems being accepted in the community. His predecessor was locally-born and long-serving, and more than one person has helpfully pointed out various ways in which Griffith is doing things differently. He believes that acceptance will come with time, and is not deterred from his goal of stamping out pagan superstitions in the mine.



REV. JOHN WESLEY GRIFFITH

"There is no room for pagan superstition. Not in the modern age, and not in a godly society."

The minister is a tall, slender man with dark hair and blue eyes. His right leg is in a plaster cast from the knee to the ankle, and he gets around using a pair of wooden crutches.

Griffith was born in Carnarvon by the coast, and named one of the founders of the Methodist movement. He was educated in Birmingham in England, and Llantylwyll is his first posting. He is determined to do well here, and especially to bring the local community up to date by promoting science and education.

- ❖ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 3 Empathy 4
- ❖ **INSPIRATION 4 OBSERVATION 3**
MANIPULATION 2 LEARNING 1
- ❖ Mental Toughness 3 Physical Toughness 1
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Good quality clothes, Bible



GLADYS PUGH

"The Minister's not to be bothered. Doctor's orders."

Mrs. Pugh takes great pride in her role as housekeeper to the village's minister, and is very protective of him. She is determined to keep him in the house as much as possible while his leg heals, and doubly suspicious of outsiders who might have come in the wake of the accident to take advantage of him in some way.

- ❖ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ❖ **FORCE 2 STEALTH 2 VIGILANCE 2**
- ❖ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Working clothes and "Sunday best"



DAI DAVIES

“Oh, I could tell you plenty of stories, if it’s stories you’re after. If only my throat weren’t so dry.”

Dai has been in the mine for forty years, man and boy, and everyone agrees that he knows more than most. He is known for his good cheer, his fondness for a pint or two of ale, and the stories he weaves for credulous outsiders. Almost all are made up on the spot, and his cronies in the pub enjoy watching him lead his listeners on to a ridiculous conclusion. The true stories he keeps to himself, knowing that such things are well enough to know, but not safe to speak of.

Dai has a round face with deep-set blue eyes that twinkle with merriment almost all the time. He is short and stocky but strongly built.

- ❖ **Physique** 3 **Precision** 2
 Logic 2 **Empathy** 2
- ❖ **FORCE** 4 **AGILITY** 2 **LEARNING** 3
- ❖ **Mental Toughness** 2 **Physical Toughness** 2
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Working clothes, pipe

THE DRAGON

The village pub has a hand-painted sign bearing the image of a wyvern – a two-legged dragon – in gold. A **LEARNING** roll recalls that the image is associated with Owain Glyndŵr, who led a rebellion against English rule in 1400. The taproom is small, dark and smoky. A few miners, mostly older, drink in here most evenings.

CHALLENGES

The challenges at the pub mostly involve overcoming the locals’ reluctance to talk to outsiders. The hum of conversation ceases abruptly when the player characters enter. Successful **MANIPULATION** rolls are required to convince anyone to talk to the player characters.

CLUES

- ❖ A successful **MANIPULATION** roll, coupled with a round of drinks, is all Dai Davies needs to start telling tales to anyone who will listen. Most of them begin with “My granda used to say.” Some are local folk tales and legends, while others are tall tales and spontaneous fabrications. However, if the subject turns to knockers, coblynau, or other mine spirits, though, Dai tries to change the subject, and a successful **OBSERVATION** roll allows any player character to notice a watchful silence settle over the tap room. If pressed on the matter, the most anyone will say about the accident is “these things happen sometimes.”
- ❖ The accident itself is a less sensitive matter, although a successful **OBSERVATION** roll reveals that everyone who talks to the player characters is holding back a little, and that everyone is paying careful attention to what everyone else is saying. The player characters can learn that the service had been under way for about five minutes when the cavern shook, the lights went out, and the ceiling collapsed. A few of the congregation had brought lamps with them, and by the time light was restored the entrance was blocked and Reverend Griffith was on the ground with a broken leg. An extra success elicits the information

that Griffith was not anywhere near the collapse, and no one is able to account for his broken leg.

- ◆ A successful **OBSERVATION** roll lets a player character pick the word *coblyn* out of the muttered Welsh conversation. A **LEARNING** roll lets the player character know that while *coblyn* is a Welsh term for a wide range of domestic and other spirits, it is also applied to mine spirits similar to the knockers of Cornwall and the bluecaps of northern England, and the player character gains the information about knockers on page 66.
- ◆ A successful **MANIPULATION** test while asking about Reverend Griffith informs the player characters that he replaced Reverend Morgan upon the latter's death a few months ago. The villagers are reluctant to express any opinions about the new minister in front of strangers, but extra successes let the player characters know that Griffith's

determined opposition to the way things have always been done has not endeared him to his congregation. Reverend Morgan had been in the village for as long as most people can remember, and never sought to stir things up in this way.

- ◆ If the player characters ask Dai about cakes (see *Post Office and Shop* below), he becomes very quiet. Persistent questioning leads him to mutter resentfully that a fellow should be free to buy a cake when he wants without fear of interrogation, but a successful **MANIPULATION** roll forces him to admit that there is a local tradition which says that an offering of cakes and ale can be used to apologize to mine spirits that have been offended. He admits that this has not been tried in living memory: "there's never been a need, you see, not until the minister... anyway, my granda' said he'd seen it done when he was a boy, so we have to try it, don't we?"

THE MINE SPIRITS

If the player characters are able to win the confidence of Dai Davies or any of the older villagers, they can hear about the local traditions regarding the *coblynau* in the mine. You can read or paraphrase the following text to the players:

All I know is they've always been there, see – in the mine and the other underground places, so the old folk used to say. They go back forever, to the time before saints and ministers, but they've always been friends to the miners provided they're treated right. I can't speak for other places, but here's what that means in Llantywyll.

They don't like whistling or foul language in the mine, and some say they don't like arguments and bad tempers, either. Anyone who doesn't behave himself can expect a stone to the back of the head, and they may be small but they can be sharp and they always hurt. Not to injure, mind, but more like a clip round the ear to a badly behaved child. If you don't learn your lesson at first, the stones will get bigger and you may collect a scar or two. I heard of one fellow over by Llanglas who ignored their warnings and even cursed at them for throwing stones, and they struck him on the knee so hard he hasn't walked

straight since. And that with all his mates watching and no one saw a thing! They're only seen if they want to be, you see. But there's no doubt it was them, though, because there on his knee was a square sort of mark, like the head of a quarry hammer but smaller. One of their tools, and no doubt about it.

Worse though, in their eyes, are prayers and churchifying. That's how we know they're from so long ago, you see – before the Church came to these parts. That's why we don't take so much as a loaf of bread down the mine with a cross in the top.

They'll help the miners, too, if they've a mind to. We'll follow the sound of their tools tapping away, and sure enough the sound will lead us to a good seam of slate that's easy to get out and as safe as houses. And they'll throw stones to keep us away from the dangerous parts. I saw it for myself one time, years ago: me and three others were driven out of a passage by stones, and not a minute later the whole roof came down. Saved our lives, they did.

I'll not speak a word against our minister, or any other, but what happened was inevitable. Our only hope now is to make peace somehow, and make sure it doesn't happen again.

POST OFFICE AND SHOP

The village shop and post office is located roughly in the middle of the single street. It is a small, two-story building. The shop takes up the lower floor and the upper floor is a small flat occupied by postmaster Evan Jeffreys and his family.

CHALLENGES

The challenges here are the same as for anywhere else in the village. The postmaster and his family – wife Myfanwy and children Tom and Bronwen – are shy of outsiders and wary of saying or doing anything that could be construed as spreading gossip, so successful **MANIPULATION** rolls are required to get anything out of them beyond day-to-day pleasantries.

The shop's main value to the player characters is as a place where telegrams can be sent and received, which will be useful if they want to consult contacts elsewhere. The shop also offers a modest selection of foods and household items.

CLUES

- ♦ The player characters see Mrs. Jeffreys wrapping up two large fruit cakes in brown paper. She writes “Mr. Davies” on the outside in thick black pencil. A successful **MANIPULATION** roll makes her admit that the cakes were ordered by the same Dai Davies whom the player characters may have seen in the village pub, and that he is not in the habit of ordering cakes from the shop – certainly not two at once. This is a subtle clue, but it may prompt the player characters to ask Dai about the cakes (see *The Dragon*). A successful **LEARNING** roll lets a character remember that folk traditions across the world hold that angry spirits may be appeased with offerings of food and drink.
- ♦ If the player characters ask about the minister replacing his Bible (see Clues under *The Minister's House*), Mrs. Jeffreys can confirm that he ordered the replacement the day after the accident, sending a postal order that he bought from the post office. This may prompt the player characters to ask Reverend Griffith or Mrs. Pugh about it.

- ♦ If the player characters have missed any important clues elsewhere in the village, they can be given another chance to recover them by talking to the Jeffreys family.

THE RAILWAY HOTEL

This small hotel stands next to the station, and is of equally recent construction. There are four rooms upstairs, while the ground level is occupied by a small lobby, a dining room with four tables, and a kitchen and storeroom. The hotel offers bed and breakfast at 2 shillings and 6 pence per room per night, with a surcharge of 6 pence for a second person sharing a room. An evening meal is provided for an additional 6 pence, but must be booked in advance. Under no circumstances will an unmarried man and woman be permitted to share the same room.

One of the hotel's rooms is currently occupied by two mining engineers from Cardiff, Dylan Roberts and Lewis Morgan. They have been hired by Myfanwy Thomas the mine owner to investigate the collapse and supervise work to stabilize the mine.

CHALLENGES

The engineers are at work from 7 am to 6 pm, and keep to their room apart from brief appearances at breakfast and dinner. When they are not asleep, they are in their room going over charts and notes, trying to puzzle out the cause of the accident and the best way to stabilize the mine. Talking to them will require good timing as well as a successful **MANIPULATION** roll.

CLUES

The player characters can gain the following information from talking to the Engineers.

- ♦ They are completely at a loss to explain the accident. Slate mining is usually safe, free from the explosive gases and other hazards that make coal mining so dangerous.
- ♦ The two engineers have ventured a little way into the mine but have been hampered by falling stones (according to Lewis – Morgan adds drily that they

are very special stones, capable of falling sideways at high speed). Another problem has been the darkness. Beyond the reach of daylight from the entrance, the interior of the mine is pitch dark, and neither the engineers' battery-powered lamps nor the oil-fired Davy lamps of the miners seem capable of penetrating it. This is another clue that some supernatural power is at work. Player characters may realize that vaesen of various kinds can produce an impenetrable magical darkness.

- ◆ Currently, the engineers are trying to solve the problems of the darkness and the falling stones, and have not ventured far beyond the entrance. The first night after they tried to enter the mine, Lewis had a dream that the workings collapsed, sending a cloud of dust and debris flying through the village like a storm. The cloud settled around the chapel, tearing it apart brick by brick. If questioned, he says that he almost never has bad dreams – or if he does, he almost never remembers them. Morgan confirms his colleague's story, saying that Lewis woke him in the middle of the night shouting and thrashing in his sleep.
- ◆ An extra success on the **MANIPULATION** roll leads Morgan to admit that they saw something in the mine entrance, in the small area of gloom between the daylight of the entrance and the utter darkness of the mine's interior. It was little more than a glimpse, half-seen from the corner of his eye, but he could swear it was something small, like a child, and very fast. There was a flash of blue, perhaps from a hat, before the thing disappeared. It all happened so quickly that the vision was gone before he could turn his head. This clue, coupled with a successful **LEARNING** roll, can let a character realize that they are dealing with a knocker or similar mine spirit, and gives the player characters access to the information on page 66.
- ◆ The engineers are reluctant to believe any theories about angry mine spirits, but if the player characters can convince them that they can help solve the mystery, they may be induced to provide an introduction to Mrs. Thomas, giving them a

chance to persuade her to grant access to the mine. Alternatively, the engineers may be persuaded to allow the player characters to accompany them into the mine without permission.



DYLAN ROBERTS AND LEWIS MORGAN

"It's very unusual, this. Slate mining's far less prone to accidents than coal."

Dylan and Lewis are mining engineers, brought in by Mrs. Thomas to examine the mine and supervise any safety work. They are quite happy to talk with outsiders, since they feel as out of place in Llantywyll as the player characters do. However, they know almost nothing about mine spirits and local superstitions, and are unwilling to entertain any such notions.

- ◆ Physique 3 Precision 3
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ◆ **INVESTIGATION 3 OBSERVATION 2 VIGILANCE 1**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Good quality clothes, surveying instruments, notebooks



THE LLANTYWYLL SLATE MINE

Within the mine's gates is a wide yard. Sheds at one end hold the steam engines that power the sawhouse and wind carts of miners down the steeply inclined mineshaft to the workings 500 feet below and carts of rough slate up to the surface. New to the sawhouse, where slate is cut to size, is the splitting floor where skilled workers split the sawn slates into thin pieces. A rail spur allows wagons to be loaded with slate, and joins the valley line just outside Llantywyll's station.

The player characters will need permission to venture into the mine, which is currently closed while hired engineers try to stabilize the workings after the accident. Meanwhile the gates are manned by Hywel

Jones, an older miner turned watchman, who has orders to admit no one but the engineers.

The mine workings spread for almost a mile under the valley side, but the player characters will not be able to get very far beyond the entrance chamber where the service was held.

CHALLENGES

The player characters will face a challenge getting into the mine. They can take one of several approaches to this problem:

- ❖ Mrs. Thomas can grant permission to enter the mine if the player characters convince him that they can help with the problem. However, this will take a **MANIPULATION** roll unless one or more of them can present themselves as qualified

mining engineers, and any mention of spirits and superstitions will bring the conversation to an abrupt end.

- ◆ The two visiting engineers can be persuaded to let the player characters accompany them into the mine if they make a successful **MANIPULATION** roll and convince the engineers that they can help resolve the situation.
- ◆ Hywel Jones is old enough to know the stories of the coblynau in the mine, and if the player characters can convince him that they know about such things and can help resolve the situation, a successful **MANIPULATION** roll can persuade him to let them into the mine – but only at night, as he does not dare to be seen going against Mrs. Thomas's orders.
- ◆ If Dai Davies has already been stopped from bringing cake and ale into the mine, Mrs. Thomas

has given him specific orders that he is not to be admitted under any circumstances, on pain of Hywel losing his job. If this is the case, nothing will induce him to allow Dai anywhere near the mine, and all rolls made by the player characters while talking to him are one step more difficult than normal.

- ◆ Alternatively, the player characters can use **STEALTH** to try to sneak into the mine unnoticed.

The other main challenge in the mine will be dealing with the angry coblynau, who will see the player characters as just more irritating mortals and try to drive them away. Taking care to stay out of sight, the coblynau will shower the player characters with rock chippings and try to undo anything they set out to accomplish in the mine, such as setting up pit props to support the ceiling. If the player characters are not deterred, they will escalate to causing localized roof collapses and striking out at a victim's legs with their hammers, as they did to Reverend Griffith.

When the player characters have the coblynau's attention, whether it be friendly or otherwise, proceed to the Confrontation phase of the mystery.

THE COBLYNAU

The coblynau can be treated as knockers, which are described on page 66. They have no leader as such, and should be treated as a single entity. They are naturally invisible, and take care never to be seen. They watch from various hiding-places, keeping track of anyone who enters the mine and hearing everything they say. They may answer from the darkness, either directly or by talking audibly among themselves. If you want to make things easy on the player characters, they converse in English; for more of a challenge, they only speak Welsh.

If the player characters manage to capture one of them, the others will harass them with thrown rocks and noise, in the hope of giving their comrade a chance to escape.

MAGICAL POWERS

- ◆ **ENCHANTMENT:** Earthquake. The coblynau can cause the mine to shake, showering an area with stones ranging from the size of a thumbnail to that of a loaf of bread and stirring up dust that blocks vision and can choke those caught in it. They can also cause an area to collapse entirely, filling the tunnel with rock.
- ◆ **CURSE:** Lame. If the coblynau choose to do so, their thrown rocks can cause lameness (see page 119 of the core rulebook).

DARK AND ECHOES

Even if the player characters can find a way to dispel the magical darkness cast by the angry spirits, the atmosphere in the mine can be unnerving to those who are not accustomed to working underground. Candles and lanterns only illuminate a narrow radius, throwing weird and distracting shadows as their holders move. Candles are easily blown out, either by the coblynau or by a chance breeze through the tunnels, plunging everything into pitch darkness. A sudden slip, or a thrown rock, can cause a character to drop a lantern, with the same result.

Sounds echo weirdly off the rock walls of the mine, making it almost impossible to tell where a sound is coming from. Natural sounds such as dripping water are amplified, and even whispered conversations echo back and forth, carrying for some way. **STEALTH** rolls to sneak or hide are one step more difficult than normal.

CLUES

The player characters can uncover the following clues at the mine:

- ❖ Hywel Jones is old enough to remember Dai's grandfather, old Huw Bach Jones, as an old man. He remembers more of the story than Dai does (see Clues in the section on *The Dragon*). If he is asked about the story, a successful **MANIPULATION** roll induces him to fill in some of the details. When Huw Bach was a boy, it was said, a miner named Gareth Jones stumbled and fell, breaking his leg. In pain and shock, he let loose a stream of profanity, cursing the mine and everyone in it. Immediately, the ground began to shake and stones began to fall from the ceiling. The miners fled, dragging Jones with them. As soon as he was able to hobble on crutches, he went back to the mine with a fruit cake and a bottle of whisky, leaving it by the entrance and issuing a sincere apology. Jones's leg healed badly, and he walked with a crutch for the rest of his life and never dared enter the mine again. But some part of his apology was accepted, for the miners found the offering missing when they arrived for their shift the next day, and although they were fearful at first, the mine continued to be safe and productive.
- ❖ Player characters who are trained engineers, or who make successful **INVESTIGATION** rolls in the mine, can gain some or all of the information that is available by talking to the engineers in the hotel (page 120).
- ❖ Those with the Sight can catch a glimpse of the coblynau if they make a successful **VIGILANCE** roll at the right time. They look just like knockers (page 66) and carry their tools with them.
- ❖ Showers of rock chippings seem to come from nowhere, but successful **VIGILANCE** rolls can tell any character roughly where the thrower or throwers are, even if they do not possess the Sight. Likewise, the player characters have a chance to see other clues to a coblyn's position.



HYWEL JONES

"You're not supposed to be here. You need a paper from Mistress Thomas."

One of the oldest men in the village, Hywel no longer works in the mine but has been given the job of night watchman. He guards the gate to the mine workings from dusk to dawn, keeping them chained and padlocked. He has never had to deal with anything worse than youngsters breaking in on a dare, and treats the player characters courteously but firmly – he knows his duty and sticks to it.

Hywel is short and wiry, but beginning to stoop with age. He took the night job partly because he prefers his own company, and is hard to draw into conversation.

- ❖ **Physique 3 Precision 2**
- Logic 2 Empathy 2**
- ❖ **FORCE 2 OBSERVATION 4 VIGILANCE 4**
- ❖ **Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 2**
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Working clothes, stick

CONFRONTATION

The final confrontation takes place in the mine, close to the entrance. A lot will depend on the approach that the player characters choose to take.

They may come as supplicants, intending to apologize on behalf of the miners for insulting the mine spirits by holding a Christian service there. An offering of cakes and ale, like that carried by Dai Davies (see the Countdown on page 113) will earn them a hearing, or help improve the chances that another approach will be received favorably. For example, the player characters might stay respectfully just outside the mine, talking loudly about the minister's foolishness and how the miners do not support him. A promise that crosses and prayers will be kept out of the mine from now on will help to placate the spirits, but if it is broken in the smallest detail, lives will be at risk and no second chances will be given.

Another approach is to show the coblynau that they are dealing with mortals who know a thing or two, who have the Sight and can defend themselves from supernatural dangers. The best way to do this is to counter all of the coblynau's attacks without threatening them directly, and then announce that they have come here to make peace between them and the villagers rather than to fight.

The third approach is to confront the coblynau directly, using their weakness toward crosses and other elements of Christianity to drive them out of the mine. This is highly dangerous, as Reverend Griffith found out to his cost, and it will require the player characters to scour every inch of the mine. If the coblynau are forced to leave, they will collapse as much of it as they can in response to the mortal aggression, and regardless of how much of the mine can be re-opened it will remain full of dangers and will never prosper.

Another confrontation is with Reverend Griffith, who is more determined than ever to drive superstition from the mine. If the player characters do not act quickly and decisively, Reverend Griffith goes to the mine again, at the head of a rather smaller group of parishioners. In his mind the first accident has only stirred up the fears of the more superstitious villagers, and he feels that he has no choice but to hold another

service to prove that the accident was a fluke and not the work of angry mine spirits. When he does this is up to you, but you can use the incident whenever you feel that the pace of the adventure is flagging, or that the players need a little encouragement to take action. If he is not prevented from entering the mine for a second time, Griffith holds another service and the coblynau collapse the whole mine, killing everyone underground and putting the mine out of operation permanently. This can be avoided if the player characters can either persuade Griffith to leave the mine to the coblynau, or scare him into leaving the village, or pull strings with the Methodist Church to have him posted elsewhere.

AFTERMATH

The continued operation of the Llantywyll slate mine, and the survival of the village, depends on whether the player characters can help to make peace with the coblynau and persuade Reverend Griffith to stop his campaign to stamp out local superstitions.

- ♦ If the player characters succeed, the mine can be re-opened by the visiting engineers and normal operations can resume in a week or two. Production returns to normal by the end of the month, and everything is as it was before the incident.
- ♦ Unless he is convinced to stop or somehow removed from Llantywyll (for example, by being posted elsewhere), he will resume his campaign as soon as his leg heals. Things will go from bad to worse, until the mine is closed permanently by a massive collapse. If Griffith is in the mine at the time, it is quite possible that he will be killed.
- ♦ Without the mine, the village of Llantywyll will wither and die, its inhabitants forced to move away in search of work. All that remains will be a ghost town.

Unless the player characters choose to remain in Llantywyll for the long term, they will probably not witness the aftermath. Instead, they may receive letters from Dr. Evans updating them on the situation, and if something dramatic happens they may read about it in a newspaper.



THE HAMPSTEAD GROUP

PRELUDE

This mystery takes place in the heart of London, a place where few expect to find fairies and other supernatural creatures. The borough of Hampstead has grown recently thanks to the North London Railway, as the wealthy flee the increasingly crowded center for the fresh air and pleasant walks of nearby Hampstead Heath.

BACKGROUND

Among those attracted to Hampstead's fine houses and pleasant views are a growing number of artists and other creative types. Newford House is home to one such colony, whose activities and lifestyle scandalize

their older neighbors and fascinate their younger ones.

At the heart of the Hampstead Group, as they and their adherents call themselves, is the wealthy and mysterious Katherine "Kitty" Danville, who became the owner of Newford House after the death of her banker husband a few years ago. She immediately set about transforming the luxurious house from a symbol of her husband's status into a vibrant artists' colony. In addition to the artists, writers, and musicians who call Newford House home, creative types come from across London and further afield for Kitty's salon evenings and week-long festivals. It is whispered among her followers that she numbers Oscar Wilde among her discarded lovers, and was the reason he forswore women for the rest of his life. She refuses to comment.

In fact, Kitty is a *glaistig* (page 62). Banished from Scotland a few years ago, she moved to London. Having ensnared and disposed of her wealthy husband, she established Newford House as her own personal realm, trying to recreate the fey world she had known and pursuing a sincere love for the arts. Pale young men of poetic temperament are her favorite companions, and the unpredictable nature and almost perpetual inebriation of the aesthetes in her colony ensure that no questions are raised when one of their number suddenly disappears.

Most of her victims have families who have given up on them, or who have no idea where they have gone beyond the general notion that they went to London to find fellow artists. Aspiring poet Martin Beddowes is an exception. His sister Amelia is determined to find him and persuade him to come home. She traced him to the Newford House colony, and learned that he was last seen there two weeks ago and apparently left without providing an explanation or a forwarding address. While she was at the house, though, she noticed his pocket-watch and chain in the possession of one of the people there. Knowing that he would never leave without it, she fears that something terrible has happened to him, but as a young woman on her own she does not feel able to investigate further without help. She turns to an old friend of her family for help, and the player characters set out to solve a missing persons case that turns out to be far more complicated than it seems.

The truth of the matter, of course, is that Beddowes was killed and eaten by the *glaistig*, along with many other young men who came to the colony in search of patronage and artistic freedom.

CONFLICTS

The main conflict in this mystery is between the fey and the mundane, as represented by Kitty and her artists' commune on the one hand and Amelia and the respectable, middle-class folk of Hampstead on the other. Kitty and her artists are both seductive and disturbing, as the fey has been throughout history, and

THE AESTHETIC AND DECADENT MOVEMENTS

These two artistic movements both inspired and scandalized late 19th-century European and American society, and led to the setting up of many artists' colonies whose inhabitants sought to escape the world to focus on beauty and creativity.

The aesthetic movement placed beauty above all things, and is credited with coining the phrase 'art for art's sake'. To the aesthetes, beauty was its own justification, divorced from utility, philosophy, politics, and everything else. It was the only thing of value in the world. The decadents added a cynical twist, maintaining that modern civilization was doomed to decline just as the decadent Roman Empire had done, and that sensual pleasure, rather than beauty, was the only thing worth pursuing.

mundane mortals are as fearful of the feelings that the fey and the decadent stirs in them as they are of the creatures that promote those feelings. Another dimension of this conflict is Kitty's desire to create an artistic utopia with no rules and the outside world's insistence on consequences for actions, as represented by the neighbors, the police, and the newspaper.

Secondary conflicts abound within the colony, whose members act out their petty rivalries and jealousies as viciously as children in a schoolyard. The amoral philosophy of the decadent movement gives them permission to act as badly as they please, and not just in the pursuit of sensual pleasure. Additional secondary conflicts may be found within the community of Hampstead, where some of the younger people have become fascinated by the colorful, amoral world of the colony, to the absolute horror of their parents.

As an optional source of further conflict, Kitty may not be the only supernatural member of the colony. Others may be posing as mortals there, pursuing their own drives and goals that will inevitably come into conflict with each other and with the morals and norms of society.

INVITATION

This mystery begins with a letter from Amelia Beddowes reaching one of the player characters, either directly or through a mutual acquaintance who is her godparent. Her letter, which is also available as *Handout 3A* at the end of the book, reads as follows:

My Dear,

I hope you will forgive my presumption in writing to you after so long without much contact between us. I offer no excuse for my lapse in correspondence, though I hope you will look kindly upon my explanation, which follows directly, and upon my plea for your help. I ask not for myself, but for my wayward brother Martin, who as you know has driven our parents to the brink of despair since he resolved to abandon his family and business for the gypsy life of a poet. Long have we worried that he would come to a bad end, and now I fear — though I pray I am mistaken — that the worst has come to pass.

It has been more than two months since anyone in the family heard from my brother. Though his letters were invariably requests for money, they did at least confirm that he was still alive. With mother and father being kept at home by ill health and the concerns of business, it fell to me to travel to London and search for him, starting at the last address to which he asked for money to be sent.

To make a long story short, I came at last to Newford House, at Gladstone Place in the borough of Hampstead. It is an artistic colony, filled with people of the most peculiar and disturbing sort, although I will admit that I had become quite well acquainted with this type of person in the course of my search. Although little sense was to be had from those living there, most of whom were clearly under the influence of drink and worse, I did learn that Martin had been there, but had not been seen for some time: depending on whom I asked, this was between one and three weeks ago. No one could say where he went.

After a few minutes, a tall lady came down the stairs to find out who I was and what I wanted. A visible change came over the others, who had been full of crass jokes and improper invitations but swiftly put on an air of deference. I gathered that her name was ‘Kitty’ and that she was the leader of this questionable community.

I must confess that she frightened me. By contrast with her subjects — I can call them such, for they fawned and cringed like sycophants — she stood tall and straight, and there was something in her eyes

that frightened me, though I cannot say precisely what it was. This ‘Kitty’ received me with courtesy and offered me tea as she heard my questions, though I felt that she learned more from me than I from her, without asking anything.

She repeated the tale told me by the others, that Martin — whom she called a ‘dear boy’, which unsettled me unaccountably — had resided there briefly before moving on to an unknown destination. Her community was open to all, she explained, and it was common for visitors to appear unannounced, stay as long as they cared, and leave without notice.

Her words were quite reasonable, and perfectly in keeping with what I had already heard, but they rang false to me. I know my brother, and given a place to stay and compose — especially among such company, and with such a lack of financial obligation that he had not been obliged to beg the family for money — I know that nothing would induce him to leave.

I know myself, too, and I know that I can get no further with this ‘Kitty’ woman. Therefore I beg you, by the love you bear our family, to help us find Martin, or to find out what has become of him.

I enclose a photograph of Martin — not a recent one, regretfully, but sufficient for you or another to recognize him by — and will wait anxiously for any news.

Your loving Amelia

The photograph is *Handout 3B*.

PREPARATIONS

As usual, before leaving their headquarters, the player characters can prepare for the journey and gain an Advantage. For more information, see chapter 9 in the *Vaesen* core rulebook.

Player characters seeking information about Newford House can find that it was purchased by a banker named Edward Danville about six years ago, and passed to his wife Katherine on his death two years ago. A search of the newspapers will turn up various small stories about the artists’ colony there, mainly reports of complaints made by the neighbors about noise and ‘immoral behavior’. Contacts in the art world and the bohemian *demi-monde* can also provide some information about Newford House.

AMELIA BEDDOWES

It is up to you whether Amelia takes an active role in this mystery beyond bringing it to the attention of the player characters. She could return to Newford House with them as a helper NPC, or she could stay in the background, waiting to hear the results of their investigation. Each of these options has advantages and disadvantages, and you should decide which would work better for your group.

Amelia has already talked to the people at Newford House, and they know her face. If they see her again, accompanied by capable-looking player characters, they will be on their guard and dealing with them will be at least one step more difficult than normal. On the other hand, she knows the area from her previous visit, and some of the neighbors and local shopkeepers may treat a sister in search of her brother more sympathetically than a group of strangers.

The player characters will have more work to do if Amelia stays behind, but they will be able to hide their motives from those NPCs who have seen her, and they will not have to protect her from danger. Also, there is no risk that the players will lean on her as an easy conduit to the gamemaster's knowledge if their own efforts are not as successful as they hope.

The player characters also have the option of meeting with Amelia Beddowes and receiving a fuller account of her search for her brother and her impressions of the people at Newford House. She can add little to the information in her letter, but if you wish you can use this opportunity to pass on any details from the relevant NPC descriptions that you think she would have.

IN THE MYTHIC NORTH

This Mystery can be set in the Mythic North quite easily, with a few small changes.

The decadent movement was less widespread in Sweden than it was in France or Britain, but its adherents included the writers Hjalmar Söderberg and Eric Stenbock. The colony could be placed in a fashionable area of Stockholm, or even at Stenbock's estate near Kolga in Estonia. The names of the colony's members can be changed, and Kitty could be possessed by a mare (page 138 in the core rulebook) or she could still be a glaistig, having traveled to Sweden from Scotland as the wife of a merchant whom she then killed.



THE JOURNEY

The journey to Hampstead from the Society's London headquarters is a short one, either by train from Euston station or by hansom cab. In either case, it takes less than an hour.

ARRIVAL

Upon arriving in the pleasant, leafy suburb of Hampstead, the player characters have a number of options. They can go directly to Newford House and demand to know what happened to Martin Beddowes, which will move the mystery directly to the confrontation phase. However, seasoned players (and characters) will probably want to gather more information first. They can find out something about Newford House and its inhabitants at the following locations.



AMELIA BEDDOWES

"I must find my brother!"

Amelia is a young woman of 19, both slender and pale, with blue eyes and auburn hair. She is well dressed in the cloths of a middle-class woman, and speaks in educated tones. While her appearance may lead people to underestimate her, she is more capable than she looks and is absolutely determined to find her brother. She acts with a confidence that is half naïveté and half rooted in the certain belief that no one will dare harm a woman, backed up with a few fencing moves that Martin taught her in their younger days, which make her umbrella an unexpected weapon.

- ❖ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ❖ **AGILITY 2 CLOSE COMBAT 1 VIGILANCE 2**
OBSERVATION 2 INSPIRATION 2
- ❖ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Umbrella (damage 1, range 0, bonus +1, skill **CLOSE COMBAT**)

COUNTDOWN AND CATASTROPHE

Two separate countdowns unfold simultaneously in the course of this mystery. One is driven by Kitty, who takes action once she realizes that the player characters offer more of a threat to her colony than regular mortals could. The other is driven by Amelia, who grows impatient if the player characters do not confront Kitty immediately.

Kitty's first actions will be to break into the player characters' lodgings and steal whatever documents and other evidence she can find. She may do this in person, or she may send one or two of her artists, who have picked up some useful skills by associating with criminals as part of their rejection of respectable society. She wants to know why the player characters are investigating her and what they know. If she feels that they are a potential threat, she will try to divert them by enchanting one or more characters and turning them against the rest of the group. If this fails, or if such manipulation of their characters would not go down well with the players, Kitty will target someone close to them: a landlady or servant in the place where they are staying, for example. If she cannot scare them off, she will arrange for small "accidents" to befall them. These will be frightening but not too deadly at first, but will escalate to full-blown attempts on the lives of any characters who have antagonized her.

Amelia, meanwhile, grows increasingly impatient at any lack of progress. She will begin by encouraging the player characters to take a more aggressive approach with Kitty, growing angry and critical if they do not. As her frustration grows, she finally decides to leave the player characters behind – or perhaps to use them as a diversion – while she storms into Newford House and confronts Kitty directly. She is especially willing to do this if she does not suspect Kitty's supernatural nature. It is quite likely that Kitty will be able to subdue her, forcing the player characters to rescue her from the house in addition to their other problems.

COUNTDOWN

1. Kitty tells the player characters the same story she told Amelia – and the same story she tells anyone who comes looking for a missing relative or friend: that Martin left a few days ago without saying where he was going. She says that people come and go all the time, since true artists are restless souls. She invites the player characters to leave an address where they or the Beddowes family can be contacted in case Martin should return. She refuses to let them search the house, maintaining that Martin took all his belongings with him in a carpet bag, so there are no clues to be found.
2. If the player characters continue to investigate, Kitty makes another attempt to send the player characters away, saying that Martin had once said that he longed to visit the Lake District and see the landscapes that inspired the poet William Wordsworth.
3. Kitty appears to relent and invites the player characters into the house, giving them permission to search the room where Martin stayed and question his two room-mates, George Bland and Ralph Molesby. Martin never stayed in this particular room, and Kitty has coached Bland and Molesby on what to say so that these troublesome visitors leave as soon as possible. She has also planted a book of Wordsworth's poetry and another of Lake District views beside the bed that Bland and Molesby say was Martin's.

CATASTROPHE

If all her attempts to deter Amelia and the player characters fail, Kitty decides on drastic action. She moves the artists out of Newford House under cover of night – or her favorites among them, at least – and sets the house on fire as a diversion. If the player characters fail to stop them, they can find out from the station master that they took a night train to London's Euston station. After that, their trail goes cold. Euston is a major hub, connected to all the other great London termini, and from there they

IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE MYSTERY

- ✦ **AMELIA BEDDOWES:** The sister of the missing artist, who introduces the player characters to the mystery. She may or may not accompany them – see the boxed text on page 129.
- ✦ **KITTY DANVILLE:** A glaustrig masquerading as a mortal widow, who turned her home into a colony for artists and writers in order to draw prey to her.
- ✦ **SERGEANT GERALD HALL:** A police officer who can give the player characters access to a police report detailing the last time Martin was seen.
- ✦ **GEORGE BLAND AND RALPH MOLESBY:** Two guests at Newford House who try to misdirect the player characters but may inadvertently help them.

could have gone anywhere in the country – or beyond, if they take a boat train to a ferry port.

Kitty Danville has escaped, leaving Newford House a smoking ruin, several of her less favored followers dead or horribly burned, and the remains of Martin Beddowes and her other victims charred beyond all hope of identification.

LOCATIONS

The following locations are marked on the map of Hampstead. If the characters wish to investigate other locations, you are free to improvise, but it is perfectly alright to simply explain that the place in question is not part of the mystery and that there is nothing for them there.

THE ARTISTS: ADVANCED OPTIONS

The rest of this mystery assumes that everyone in the Newford House artists' colony is mortal, and no one knows about Kitty Danville's true nature. If you want to make the mystery more complex and challenging for the players, you have various options.

Some or all of the artists may know that Kitty is a supernatural being. Some may believe she is a Muse or other semi-divine creature, who has come to inspire them and nurture their creativity. Others may know that she has a darker side, and either obey her out of fear or follow her because they see her as a supernatural embodiment of everything they believe: that all life is meaningless except for art and pleasure, and that the lives of mundane, everyday people have no value. These may seem like extreme views, but given the fact that everyone is in a near-constant state of intoxication from drink and drugs, their capacity for rational thought is severely hampered.

Another option is that the Newford House community is a coterie of supernatural creatures, all of them masquerading as mortal artists. Some or all of them feed upon the wide-eyed mortals who are drawn to

the community, and Kitty rules over them and ensures that meddling mortals do not expose the truth.

There are many possibilities in the *Vaesen* core book and in this book. One might find a neck, or even a shapeshifted mermaid, masquerading as a mortal musician. A human-looking forest troll might pose as a woodworker, creating furniture and sculptures of impossible beauty. Others might be baobhan sith, appearing like beautiful and mysterious artists to lure impressionable victims into their clutches.

London is home to mortals from all over the world, and the same may be true of its supernatural population. In the bohemian setting of an art colony, no one is surprised to encounter people from across Europe and even further afield, so you could include creatures like vampires, Greek lamias, and Indian ghouls if you care to create game statistics for them.

An artists' colony is a promising feeding ground for a *leanan sidhe* (page 63), though you may prefer to make the *leanan sidhe* a red herring. With a little encouragement, the player characters may come to the conclusion that Kitty is a *leanan sidhe* rather than a *glaitig*.

THE NEIGHBORS

With the exception of Newford House, Gladstone Place is a quiet and genteel suburban street inhabited by wealthy, middle-class families, much like the rest of Hampstead. All of the neighboring houses are new and well-maintained, surrounded by leafy gardens and high walls. Most are three or four stories.

All the neighboring houses are treated as a single entity, as the player characters will hear the same things from everyone, with only minor variations.

CHALLENGES

The major challenge in talking with the neighbors is persuading them to speak. Like all good, middle-class English people, they find it irritating – even

disturbing – when perfect strangers knock on their doors unannounced and ask questions about their neighbors. While they are willing to gossip and complain among themselves, discussing local business with outsiders is another matter entirely.

There is the reputation of the neighborhood to consider. What will people think of them if word gets out that they live in an area frequented by artists? And what are the motives of these strangers? They may claim to be looking for a young man who has gone missing, but who is to say they are not scandal-mongering journalists intent on splashing this local embarrassment across the pages of the gutter press and dragging the names and reputations of respectable people through the mud by association?



Even if they are looking for a missing artist – or poet, or whatever they said this young man was – should one encourage people who clearly have some connection to that debauched and shocking world? Should one even be seen talking to them? Far better, many neighbors will think, to send them away with a stout rebuff, so the world and especially the other neighbors can see that this household, at least, is respectable and has no truck with such degenerates.

This challenge is made greater by the fact that no one answers their own front door in this kind of neighborhood. Instead, the player characters must get past the domestic staff to secure an audience with any member of the family, and they are even more suspicious of outsiders and careful of the household's

reputation than their employers are. As well they might be, for the mere suspicion of engaging in loose talk or harmful gossip could see them both unemployed and homeless, with no hope of making a living unless they can take a good reference to other houses.

While there is never any guarantee of success, a better approach than simply knocking on the door would be to send a letter to the head of each household, establishing the writer's credentials as a member of 'respectable society' and emphasizing that the missing poet's worried family only wish to find him and bring him home so that he may be induced to mend his ways. Several of the neighboring households are worried about the influence that the artists' colony is having on their younger members, and if

TYPICAL NEIGHBOR

"I have no idea what you mean."

The householders of Gladstone Place are respectable people, and cling to their respectability with a vice-like grip. No breath of scandal is ever acknowledged – especially to an outsider – and they absolutely refuse to acknowledge the existence of anything that threatens the image of serene, bourgeois perfection. The inhabitants of Newford House place them in something of a dilemma: the disturbances and deplorable behavior cannot be ignored, but they cannot be acknowledged for the sake of the street's reputation. Most householders try to have as little as possible to do with Newford House and its denizens, hoping that if they are ignored for long enough, they will eventually go away.

The residents of Gladstone Place are uniformly prosperous, having made money in trade or industry of some kind or another. Most are in their forties or older, and many have children away at boarding school or university, or home for the holidays depending on the time of year. A threat to the moral well-being of their offspring is one of the few things that can spur them to take action.

- ❖ **Physique 2 Precision 2**
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ❖ **MANIPULATION 3 LEARNING 2**
OBSERVATION 2
- ❖ **Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1**
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Gamemaster's choice

they can be made to feel sympathy for Amelia and her family, they will be far more willing to talk – especially if the player characters hint that the Beddowes family is as embarrassed by their wayward son as any of the neighboring families would be, and like them plan to sweep the whole matter under the rug once Martin is recovered, rather than spreading the story about.

CLUES

If they can be induced to talk, the neighbors can offer a general picture of goings-on at Newford House. They do not know Martin Beddowes from any of the others who come and go, but their information can be useful as background information.

- ❖ Newford House used to be quiet and respectable. It was the home of a banker named Edward Danville and his wife Katherine. Danville died about two years ago, leaving his wife in sole possession of the house. She wasted no time in turning it into a den of vice and debauchery that is a threat to the peace of the area and the morals of its young people.
- ❖ Kitty is Scottish by birth, and although she affects an air of refinement the softest trace of a Scots brogue can be detected in her speech. No one has ever heard her talk about Scotland, though, and she has been quick to change the subject when it came up in conversation. A few neighbors asked Edward about this, and he alluded to some misfortune that befell her in Scotland, about which she refuses to talk even to him.
- ❖ When Edward Danville purchased Newford House, its garden wall was topped by a beautiful wrought-iron fence with an arched gateway. Danville had it all removed – at his wife's insistence, according to rumor. Observant player characters may notice that there are lead plugs in the low wall, marking the points where the fence's iron posts were removed. Astute characters will recognize the aversion to iron as common among fey and other supernatural creatures, although this clue alone is insufficient to identify her as a glai stig.

- ◆ A couple of the householders recall having Mr. and Mrs. Danville as dinner guests when the banker was still alive. At one dinner where the Bishop of Southwark (pronounced “Suthark”) was among the guests, Kitty behaved very strangely, refusing his handshake and leaving early pleading a headache. The couple started declining invitations after that. Again, this aversion to Christianity and its trappings is common among fey and other supernatural creatures, but does not identify Kitty as a glaistig.
- ◆ These so-called artists hold loud and raucous parties at all hours of the day and night, caring nothing for their neighbors’ sleep or the reputation of the area (the word ‘reputation’ will be heard often during these conversations), and either ignore their neighbors’ complaints or respond with hostility. The police have visited the house on more than one occasion, responding to breaches of the peace. None of the neighbors will admit to having complained to the police, though, because no one wants to be seen as a troublemaker.
- ◆ A few of the neighbors may recognize Martin from his photograph, though most do not. No one recalls having any dealings with him specifically, although they freely admit that the people from Newford House are all the same to them, except for Kitty Danville.
- ◆ Some neighbors may mention that Kitty walks with a strange gait, and speculate that she may have suffered a leg injury earlier in life. A small child may say that she has “sheep feet”, having caught a glimpse of her goat-like legs – but will quickly be shushed by their embarrassed parent.

THE HAMPSTEAD GAZETTE

The local weekly newspaper has a small office in the High Street, and copies can be purchased from the newsagents’ shop and the station. The paper is published on Thursday and is normally sold out by noon on Saturday.

CHALLENGES

Characters with the Journalist talent (*Vaesen*, page 53) gain +1 to all Empathy tests made here.

The challenge here is to gain access to the newspaper’s files relating to Newford House over the last two years. The wealthier and more influential residents of Gladstone Place have put pressure on editor Roland Blake to refrain from publishing anything about the goings-on there, and he fears repercussions if anything should appear in an outside paper. Additionally, it will be a severe embarrassment for him and his paper if someone else should be first to publish a story that takes place on his “patch.” Therefore, he is guarded at first, but his fears can be soothed if he believes that the player characters have no plans to publish anything he tells them.

CLUES

The newspaper’s files contain a number of notes and half-written stories concerning Newford House, and if Blake grants the player characters access to them (or if they gain access by other, more nefarious means) they can uncover the following information:

- ◆ Edward and Kitty Danville moved to the area about six years ago and seem to have lived quietly until his death two years ago.
- ◆ An obituary records Edward Danville’s death as being “sudden,” but does not mention any suspicious circumstances. His age is given as 52, and a character with medical training will know that it is not uncommon for men of this age to die suddenly of a stroke or heart failure brought on by overwork, lack of exercise, and a rich diet.
- ◆ Kitty Danville started hosting salon evenings just a few weeks after her husband’s funeral, and a number of prominent writers, artists, musicians, and poets have been among her guests.
- ◆ There have been numerous disturbances at the house, and neighbors have called the police on several occasions. A few of the colony’s members have spent a night in the cells for being drunk and disorderly, but no serious charges have ever been brought against them.



ROLAND BLAKE

"That's quite a story. Of course, no one could ever print it."

Blake is a wiry man in his mid-thirties, with thinning, sandy hair, pale blue eyes, and glasses. He wears a suit and a straw boater when outdoors, but in the office he is in shirtsleeves with dark sleeve protectors to keep ink off his shirt.

He is interested in any local stories, but skeptical of supernatural tales without compelling evidence. He knows his audience well, having run the paper for the last five years, and it steers clear of printing scandal and gossip, or anything else that reflects badly on Hampstead. A murder, though – that is too big a story to ignore, and he knows he could parlay his position here into commissions from larger papers if the story breaks.

- ❖ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 3 Empathy 4
- ❖ **LEARNING 2 OBSERVATION 3**
MANIPULATION 2
- ❖ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1
- ❖ **EQUIPMENT:** Notebook, pencils, pen-knife

THE POLICE STATION

Hampstead's police station is a small but well-appointed building with a blue lamp on either side of the door. Inside is a lobby with a counter of polished wood and brass, manned by the desk sergeant around the clock. Within are various offices and a few small cells.

CHALLENGES

As at the *Gazette* offices, the main challenge is to gain access to files concerning Newford House. The police do not take kindly to civilians conducting their own investigations, and Martin Beddowes has not been formally reported missing. If the player characters can gain access to the station's files, they can find some or all of the information given below.

CLUES

- ❖ The police files back up what the player characters may already have learned from the neighbors and the newspaper, that the police have been called to Newford House a number of times responding to complaints of noise, drunkenness and unruly behavior. The notes of the officers who responded mention a rebellious attitude on the part of the 'artistic persons' at the colony, recording their statements that they reject all laws and social conventions.
- ❖ There are records of a few arrests for breach of the peace and being drunk and disorderly, with the miscreants spending a night on the cells and being fined amounts ranging from five shillings to one pound. In a few instances it is recorded that the fines were paid by Mrs. Danville, householder.
- ❖ Martin Beddowes is mentioned in the notes twice, once for attempting to steal the helmet of a policeman who was sent to the house and once for 'being drunk in charge of a bicycle, which was found to have been stolen'. The last incident took place about a month ago, when a constable on the beat saw him pedaling unsteadily toward the station. The report is reproduced as *Handout 3C*.
- ❖ If they are shown the photograph of Martin, the police confirm that this was the man mentioned in the report.

THE POLICE REPORT

Coming round the corner into the High Street, I observed a young man riding a bicycle in the direction of the station. He appeared drunk and evidently had great difficulty controlling the machine, falling off it three times as I approached him. He did not seem to hear my challenge to stop and was unable to account for the ownership of the bicycle, saying at first that he had borrowed it from a friend, and when unable to give the name of this friend, that he had found it leaning against a wall.

When I asked where he was going, he replied that he had to leave Hampstead immediately because his life was in danger. He declined to name the person who threatened him, saying only that 'she will find me'. He repeated this several times, growing more agitated as he did so. I charged him that he was drunk in charge of the conveyance and that I suspected him of having stolen it, and told him that he would spend the night in the cells at Hampstead Police Station and be questioned in the morning when he was sober. He seemed calmer after this, and offered no resistance, although he asked if the cells were secure enough to keep him safe.

Once at the police station, the young man identified himself as Martin Beddowes and gave his occupation as 'poet' and his address as Newford House, Gladstone Place, Hampstead. Owing to his condition he was unable to give any further information, but Newford House is well known to local police as a residence occupied by a colony of artistic persons of various kinds, and the subject of regular complaints by its neighbours.

The following morning, he received a visit from Mrs. Danville of Newford House where he had been staying. He seemed afraid at first but was calmer after the two had spoken together for a few minutes. Mrs. Danville said that the bicycle belonged to one of the other guests staying at her residence and offered to return it to its owner and to pay any fines or damages. Mr. Beddowes left with her, apparently of his own accord, and the matter was closed.



SERGEANT GERALD HALL

"That would be most irregular. Not that anything to do with that house is what anyone would call regular."

Sergeant Hall can usually be found manning the desk at Hampstead Police Station. He is about fifty, with brown eyes and thinning, dark hair that is flecked with gray. A walrus mustache dominates his round, reddish face. The sergeant has no tolerance for "disorder and foolishness," and since the last two years of his life have been dominated by Newford House supplying both in great quantity, he is not a happy man. While he would love to see Kitty Danville disgraced and even imprisoned, he holds out little hope of doing so. A humble police sergeant and son of a butcher has little influence compared to the widow of a wealthy banker, even if the law does happen to be on his side.

Outsiders asking questions make him even more uncomfortable, as he fears that his own inability to prevent the regular breaches of the peace from Newford House will be held against him, despite his powerlessness to do anything about them.

- ◆ Physique 3 Precision 3
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ◆ INVESTIGATION 2 CLOSE COMBAT 2
OBSERVATION 2
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1
- ◆ EQUIPMENT: Notebook, pencil, truncheon
(damage 1, range 0, bonus +1, skill CLOSE COMBAT)

THE SHOPS

The High Street has a number of shops, including a butcher's, a fishmonger's, a greengrocer's, an ironmonger's, and a newsagent and tobacconist.

CHALLENGES

Several of the shops have had run-ins with people from Newford House ranging from drunken arrogance to petty theft. Younger staff members are more willing than the householders to share their grievances with sympathetic outsiders, especially if there are no other customers to overhear. However, the

shopkeepers themselves are as wary of their reputations as the householders are, and will put a stop to idle gossip by sending the offenders to check stock in the back of the shop. They can be induced to open up by making a Challenging **MANIPULATION** test successfully.

CLUES

The shopkeepers and their staff can provide broadly the same information as the neighbors (see above), allowing you another way to give the player characters any information they might have missed before.

TYPICAL SHOPKEEPER

"This establishment does not trade in gossip. Good day to you."

Hampstead's shopkeepers are as heavily invested in the local veneer of respectability as the householders they serve – more so in some cases, where "tradesmen" aspire to making their fortune and moving up a rung on the ladder of society. They would never dream of letting local society down by consorting with muck-raking outsiders, for such behavior would lead to valued customers in Gladstone Place taking their custom elsewhere, and a black mark against their names that would follow them for the rest of their lives.

- ♦ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 4 Empathy 2
- ♦ **INSPIRATION 2 OBSERVATION 2**
INVESTIGATION 2 MANIPULATION 1
- ♦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1
- ♦ **EQUIPMENT:** Notebook, pencils, pen-knife

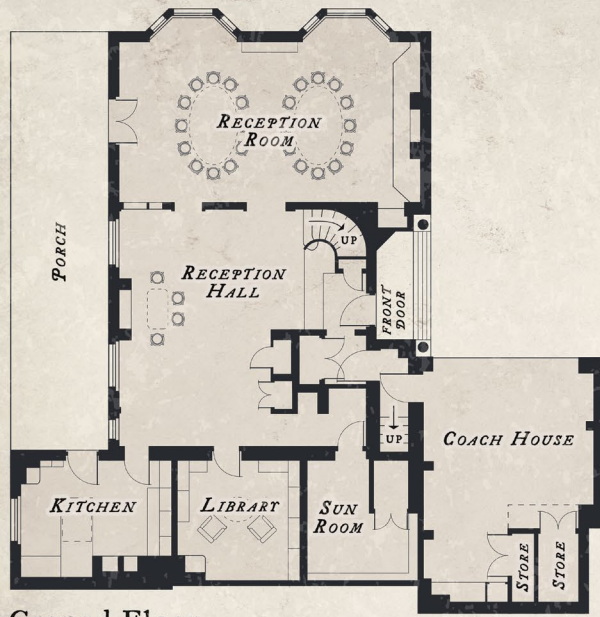
TYPICAL SHOP ASSISTANT

"I'm sure I can't say. Is there anything I can show you?"

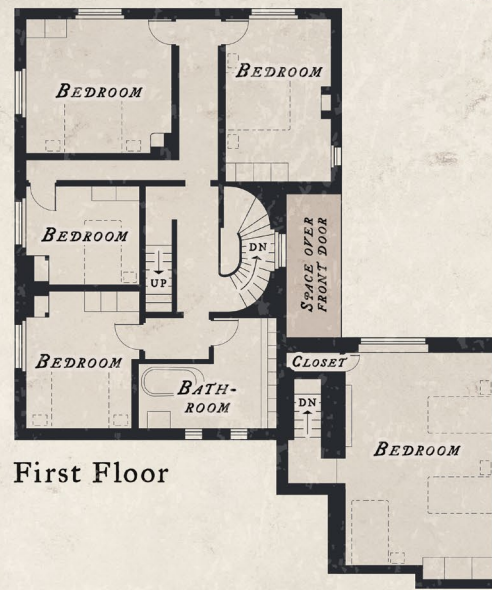
While young, those who work in Hampstead's shops know just as well as the servants of Gladstone Place that their livelihoods depend on hard work and respectable behavior. Therefore, they do all they can to avoid any conversation beyond what is necessary to sell the shop's goods. Outside of work, though, they may be induced to gossip, but only if they are sure that nothing can be traced back to them or their friends.

- ♦ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ♦ **STEALTH 1 VIGILANCE 2 OBSERVATION 2**
- ♦ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1
- ♦ **EQUIPMENT:** Nothing of note

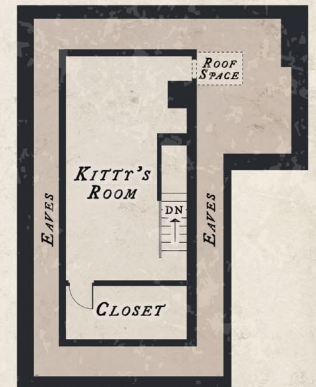
HAMPSTEAD NEWFORD HOUSE



Ground Floor



First Floor



Attic

1 2 3 4 5 METRES

NEWFORD HOUSE

Newford House is a large, four-story mansion of fairly recent construction, with a small garden at the back. The whole property is surrounded by tall trees. As they approach, the player characters can hear the sounds of music and merriment, no matter what time of day it is.

TALKING TO KITTY

When they go to Newford House, the player characters will inevitably find themselves talking to Kitty Danville. They will find it hard to get any kind of sense from anyone else in the house, and she will come to them as soon as she hears that they are there.

Kitty is a tall woman with a great force of personality. She is richly dressed in dark green silk, with black mourning jewelry marking the death of her husband. Her dark eyes never waver, and her gaze can quickly become uncomfortable. She seems to be the only person in Newford House who is unimpaired by some form of intoxication, and speaks clearly and directly.

She receives the player characters, graciously at first, leading them to a rear parlor where some daylight is allowed in and the mess is less severe than in the rest of the house. She readily confirms that

she is the owner of the house, which she has turned into a colony for artists in need of a place to stay and work. "Please excuse my guests," she says. "The artistic spirit requires certain conditions in order to flourish – much like a mushroom, one might say – and the results are as you have seen." Her accent is very similar to the cultured middle-class tones of her neighbors, though a successful **OBSERVATION** test (+1 for Scottish characters) detects very faint traces of a Scottish accent underneath. She refuses to discuss her origins, however.

CHALLENGES

- ♦ The main challenge at Newford House is to get inside and have free rein to investigate. Kitty will do everything in her power to prevent this from happening, and will not hesitate to use violence if all else fails (see *Countdown and Catastrophe* above). The artists in residence are loyal to Kitty out of a mixture of fear and gratitude, although they are easier to manipulate if the player characters can get one of them alone and away from the house.
- ♦ It is possible to sneak into the house while everyone inside is asleep, which is normally between dawn and noon. At that time, everyone except

CREATING ATMOSPHERE

Newford House is the heart of the mystery, and although the player characters may not realize it at first, they are entering the lair of a very dangerous monster. The atmosphere inside the house is completely different from any of the other places they have visited in Hampstead, which can act as a clue. Read the following text aloud or convey the information in it to the players in your own way.

The interior of the house is as dark as a cave. Thick velvet curtains cover all the windows, leaving the rooms lit only by the glow of the incense-burners that fill the air with a sickly and bewildering mixture of scents. Stains on the walls, floor, and furniture might be wine, or they might be blood: it is hard to tell in the gloom. Smoke fills the air, from the incense burners, from the tall brass hookahs that seem to stand at the center of every room, and from the ashtrays in which cigars and cigarettes have been left burning.

Fallen bottles and toppled glasses lie on the floor among plates of half-eaten food. The smell of sour

wine wafts up from sticky patches in the carpets underfoot and the colorful cushions that are scattered on the floor between pieces of more conventional furniture. The overall effect is a kind of airlessness that makes you long to get outside again.

The other thing that strikes you immediately is the heat. Coal is burning in every fireplace, creating an oppressive, tropical atmosphere that, together with the air, feels somehow unhealthy.

Bodies are strewn here and there, all dressed in the affected manner of the aesthetes and the decadents. Some are so stupefied by drink and drugs that it is hard to tell whether they are alive or dead. Others sit or lie languidly on couches or cushions, acknowledging your presence only with a slight turn of the head and a glance from a dull, incurious eye. A few – very few – are writing or sketching fitfully, not seeming to care that there is barely enough light to see by. Although one room was once a parlor, another a dining room, and others had other functions, all are now the same.

Kitty is sleeping off the excesses of the previous night, and even if the player characters make a little noise, the mortal residents are inclined to ignore it, thinking that some of their fellow artists are moving clumsily about. Only a very loud and prolonged noise will bring any response. All of this does not apply to Kitty, though, as she seldom sleeps and has sharp senses. **STEALTH** tests are made at -1 to avoid alerting Kitty, and at +1 for everyone else in the house.

CLUES

The player characters can uncover the following clues at Newford House, if they are skillful and lucky.

- ♦ Kitty has a soft Scottish accent, overlaid with the cultured tones of a fashionable aesthete. If asked, she admits to having been born in Scotland, but

declines to discuss the matter further. A successful **OBSERVATION** test, opposed by Kitty's Manipulation, allows a character to notice that she becomes uncomfortable and a little defensive, as though the reason for her leaving Scotland is a sore subject.

- ♦ A Challenging **OBSERVATION** test allows a character to catch a glimpse of one foot and see that it is a cloven hoof like that of a sheep or goat.
- ♦ The house is kept in semi-darkness, with curtains drawn and lamps dotted here and there. Kitty is careful to avoid direct light, but despite this any character who sees her from 6 feet away or less may make a Normal **OBSERVATION** test to notice that her skin has an unhealthy-looking, grayish pallor.
- ♦ One of the artists can let slip that Kitty has frequent migraines that confine her to her room. A

successful Manipulation test elicits the further information that this usually happens on a Sunday morning, and the migraines are often so bad that the sound of the bells from the parish church can make her scream in pain. Characters may realize that this is due to the aversion to Christianity and its trappings that is fairly common among supernatural creatures.

- ◆ Another member of the colony may tell of a violent row between Kitty and a Scottish artist who came to visit a few months ago. His name is not remembered, but he was a tall, strong, red-headed highlander with a new approach to landscape painting. Kitty disliked him on sight, and he left during dinner one evening, standing up from the table and speaking what sounded like harsh words in the highland dialect. No one else could make out exactly what he said, but his final word – glaistig – clearly shocked Kitty, who fled to her room.
- ◆ A successful **OBSERVATION** test while talking to George Bland and Ralph Molesby reveals that they use identical words and phrases in describing their interactions with Martin Beddowes, as though they are reading from a script. This leads to the conclusion that they have been coached by Kitty, and that the story they are telling is false. A successful **MANIPULATION** test, either through intimidation or trickery, induces them to admit that they never shared a room with Martin.
- ◆ Once this has been achieved, a further **MANIPULATION** test yields the information that Martin spent his first night on a couch in the living room, having arrived in the middle of a party and passed out drunk shortly before dawn having thrown up in a policeman's helmet. The following night he went upstairs with Kitty, and according to her he left the next morning before dawn.
- ◆ If the player characters confront Kitty with the police report about his night in the cells, she amends her story, claiming that she did not mention the incident because she wanted to spare Martin and his family the embarrassment of having it known. She admits that she brought

RED HERRINGS

Glaistigs are not as well-known as many other creatures from myth and folklore, so it is quite possible that the players may think that Kitty is some other kind of creature. Playing out their false hunches can add to the fun of this mystery, although you should take care that the players do not become frustrated as one theory after another turns out to be wrong. You should also be aware that any action taken by the player characters, even if it is based on a wrong assumption, still constitutes an attack on Kitty and she will respond appropriately.

- ◆ The first instinct of many players will be to assume that Kitty is a vampire of some kind, but this can be dispelled quite easily as she is not harmed by daylight or repelled by garlic. Being of a partly fey nature she dislikes the cross and the trappings of religion, but she is not so extreme in her reactions as a vampire would be.
- ◆ Some characters may take the story of Apollonius and the lamia (*Handout 3D*) as another clue to Kitty's nature, but experienced players should be distrustful of such a direct and obvious clue. Classical artists usually depict lamias as having snake-like lower bodies, but even if the player characters have not yet caught a glimpse of her feet, Kitty's movements make this seem most unlikely.
- ◆ The leanan sidhe appears in many stories as a patroness of artists and craftspeople, somehow feeding on their creative energy as they literally work themselves to death producing works of superhuman genius. However, it is obvious at a glance that no one in the Newford House colony is working hard at all.
- ◆ A glimpse of Kitty's goat-like feet may convince some player characters that she is a cloven-hoofed devil of some kind. This impression can be dispelled by the discovery that she is unaffected by pentagrams, exorcisms, and other measures commonly taken against devils and demons.

him back from the police station but says that he left later that day. Far from wanting to get away from her, she maintains, Martin had seen a book about the Lake District (see Countdown and Catastrophe above) and been seized by a sudden impulse to go there. As it was too late for the last train – and because he was in no fit state to travel – she says that she persuaded him to stay the night and set out in the morning. When she awoke he was gone, and so was the bicycle.

- ✦ Once Kitty learns that the player characters have heard this story, she confirms that it is true, saying that she lied earlier because her relationship with Martin, short though it was, is no one's business but his and hers. This new story is revealed as a lie if the player characters succeed in an opposed **MANIPULATION** test, but Kitty refuses to be swayed from it.
- ✦ Kitty's dress reaches the floor, and she takes care to keep her feet out of sight. This is because they are goat-like hooves: a sign that she is a glaistig. A successful **OBSERVATION** test lets a player character notice that she walks with a slightly strange gait, and extra successes (or some cunning action to reveal her feet) will reveal the truth.
- ✦ The air in the house is thick with the smells of incense, perfume, and spilled drink, but a successful **OBSERVATION** test detects a stench of decay beneath. This gets stronger as one climbs upstairs and is strongest outside the door of Kitty's room. If the player characters can get into Kitty's room, they find the smell almost overpowering.
- ✦ The large closet off Kitty's room is closed, but the carpet in front of the door is stained. A successful **INVESTIGATION** test confirms that the stain is a mixture of fresh and dried blood.
- ✦ Inside the closet, the player characters find a horrific sight. Corpses are stacked like cordwood, all of good-looking young people. Those at the bottom of the pile are quite decayed, while those at the top are fairly fresh. All of them have large bites taken out of their flesh, as if by a wild animal. Martin's body is toward the middle of the pile.



GEORGE BLAND, ARTIST

"What? Who? Never heard of the fellow. Oh, wait – him? Got anything to drink?"

Bland is aged about 25 and dressed in typical aesthetic fashion with a velvet jacket, a soft-collared shirt, and a broad, floppy bow in place of a tie. His brown hair is a mass of wild curls, held down only by accumulated oils from lack of washing. His pale blue eyes are deep-sunk and bloodshot, telling of considerable recent indulgence.

Bland is under the influence of Kitty's enchantment most of the time, but he is still erratic and may let something slip without intending to.

- ✦ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 4 Empathy 2
- ✦ **INSPIRATION 3 LEARNING 2**
MANIPULATION 2
- ✦ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Sketchbook, pencils, paints



RALPH MOLESBY, WRITER

"It's all life, you see. You can't address the depths of the human soul unless you've plumbed them yourself."

Molesby is about 20, and wears fashionable clothes that have clearly been slept in more than once. If he were cleaned up, he could pass for respectable. His dark hair is treated with macassar oil and slicked into a center parting, but flops down into his pale blue eyes continually. He is part playwright and part philosopher, or so he would describe himself, and he is currently working fitfully on a play in the decadent style that he claims will force humanity to confront the depths within and put an end to hypocritical notions of respectability once and for all. The title changes almost daily: currently it is "The Gorgon's Gaze."

Like Bland, Molesby is under Kitty's enchantment, which generally keeps him loyal enough to not reveal anything to outsiders. The fact is, though, that he could not if he wanted to, because he is so monumentally self-absorbed that he does not take anything in that does not directly concern him.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 3
Logic 2 Empathy 1
- ◆ **INSPIRATION 3 LEARNING 3**
MANIPULATION 1
- ◆ Mental Toughness 2 Physical Toughness 1
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Notebook, pencil, pen-knife

TYPICAL SERVANT

"The master (or mistress) is not available for casual visitors."

Most houses in Hampstead, and all the houses in Gladstone Place, are run by a small staff of servants. Typically, this staff consists of two or three young maids, a cook, a butler or valet, and one or two footmen who also act as gardeners, grooms, and coachmen.

Everyone in service knows that their masters can dismiss them at any time and for any reason, and that without a good reference from an employer it will be all but impossible to find another job. For this reason, they are even more wary than their employers when the reputation of the household or the neighborhood is at stake.

- ◆ Physique 2 Precision 2
Logic 3 Empathy 3
- ◆ **STEALTH 2 OBSERVATION 2 VIGILANCE 1**
- ◆ Mental Toughness 1 Physical Toughness 1
- ◆ **EQUIPMENT:** Nothing of note



KITTY DANVILLE

Rules and statistics for glaistigs are found on page 62 of this book. Kitty fled her native Scotland for London, where the burgeoning art world offered an almost unlimited supply of young men who would be easy to subdue and whose families would not be surprised if they came to a bad end or disappeared completely. Seducing a wealthy banker gave her money and a house, and after she disposed of him, she could do as she pleased.

While the neighbors were not pleased to find a decadent artists' colony in their neighborhood, they did not suspect anything more sinister was going on. Meanwhile, she took her pick of those who came to

the colony, and no one doubted her when she said they had simply moved on. The other residents were usually too distracted by drink, drugs, and constant parties to suspect anything, and she did everything she could to keep them distracted.

MAGICAL POWERS

- ◆ **ENCHANTMENT:** Enthrall. Kitty uses this power to prevent her "guests" becoming too suspicious, and will use it to turn them against the player characters if necessary.
- ◆ **CURSES:** Seduce. This is how she lures lone young men to their doom.

CONFRONTATION

The player characters receive a message from Kitty Danville, saying that a note has been found that sheds light on Martin's intentions, and inviting the player characters back to the house. She receives them graciously when they arrive, sending for the resident who she says has the note and offering her visitors tea while they wait.

The tea is drugged with laudanum (Toxicity 6) and some trusted residents are ready to help her murder the player characters as soon as they succumb to the drug. A successful **OBSERVATION** test allows a character to notice that Kitty raises her cup to her lips but never drinks. She attacks as soon as the player characters show signs of the drug's effects, or sooner if they become angry or suspicious.

CLIMAX

Kitty's veneer of art, sophistication, and mystery drops abruptly, and her true nature becomes frighteningly evident. Her hands become deadly claws and her face contorts in a bestial snarl as she throws herself upon the most capable-looking of the player characters.

The number of residents who join in the attack on the player characters depends on their strength. They should be enough to offer them a challenging fight, but not so many that their fate is sealed. It also depends on Kitty's estimation of the party, based on her previous dealings with them. She trusts no one fully but herself, and if she thinks she can overcome the whole party by herself she prefers to do so.

AFTERMATH

The outcome of this mystery depends on whether or not Kitty is defeated, and if she is killed in the process. As noted on page 62, she is immortal, but may be killed permanently if she can be made mortal again.

- ◆ Killing Kitty is not easy. She gained her immortality through a deal with some fairies in her native Scotland, more than 200 years ago. Only fairy magic can undo this, although she can be killed with a magic item that is capable of killing fairies, or by violence from another supernatural creature. If Kitty is killed, the other members of the colony flee, leaving the player characters to either explain her death to the authorities or cover it up. They can exonerate themselves and prove Kitty's guilt by showing police the half-eaten bodies in the spare bedroom.
- ◆ If Kitty is defeated but not killed, the colony disperses. She flees from Hampstead, perhaps accompanied by some of her followers, and eventually finds another place to create an artists' colony and lure attractive young people to their doom. The player characters may read, several months later, of artists going missing in other parts of the country.
- ◆ If the player characters are defeated, Kitty presents herself to the local police as the wronged party, and does her best to get them locked up for attempted murder and a host of lesser charges. No court in the land will believe their version of events, and if they persist in telling it they could find themselves in an institute for the criminally insane rather than a prison.



My dear friend,

I fear I have been remiss in failing to keep up our acquaintance. The correspondence of our student-days was most enlightening - for me, and I dare hope that you found some diversion in it as well. I still dabble in local archaeology and folklore, and have read a little in the London newspapers about recent discoveries in your own country.

I wish I were writing now to renew our acquaintance and to propose further exchanges on such fascinating matters, but I have another purpose. Certain troubling events around the village where I serve as curate of the church reminded me of our discussions concerning the legends surrounding certain standing-stones and their connection in folklore with tales of witches, hags, and other trollfolk. More than that, a young woman is dead - horribly murdered - and her former suitor is in danger of hanging for the crime.

Since the unfortunate girl's body was found, our village has been in the grip of winter. Frosts as bitter as those of February blight the flowers of June, and some creature - perhaps a wolf, though none has been seen in these parts for four centuries at least - has been driven by the cold to prey on farmers' livestock. Other strange occurrences have added to the woes of the local people, and there is talk of a curse.

In our student-days, you hinted at some knowledge, some resource, that you could bring to bear in unravelling mysteries of this nature. If you do indeed have it in your power to investigate our situation and bring the truth to light, then I beg you to do me the honour of visiting. My home is humble, but it is at your disposal.

I await your reply eagerly, and hope for the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance in person.

Sincerely yours,
Edgar Longby, M.A. (Rental), Curate of the Parish
of St. Birren, Bramcomb, Nr. Annonsbury, Glos.

To whom it may concern/My dear friend,

Some recent events at the village of Llantywyll, where I practice medicine, have prompted me to write to you. Your particular expertise, and the resources of your Society, may be able to resolve an unfortunate series of events that, I can say without exaggeration, seem to threaten ruin to the local slate mine, and therefore to the whole of the village that depends on it.

I shall be brief here, in the hope of recounting the matter in greater detail face to face. The mine suffered a minor collapse on Sunday last, when the local minister was conducting a chapel service inside. His object was to disprove the local superstition that the cross, and the other signs of Christianity, brought bad luck to those who took them underground.

By some merciful Providence no lives were lost, and apart from a broken leg on the part of the minister, which I have set and which promises a good recovery, there were no serious injuries. The mine has remained closed ever since thanks to minor subsidences and reported pockets of gas. All efforts to shore up the damaged areas and resume operations have failed, leaving the future of the mine and the prosperity of the village in jeopardy.

Regular geological and engineering surveys, the most recent of which dates from last year, have always found the workings to be safe and stable, so the accident was most unexpected – except by those who pleaded a variety of minor illnesses that Sunday and avoided the service. I should add that without exception, they made remarkable recoveries, and were able to help in the rescue efforts that same afternoon. I am reminded of my school days, when unexplained stomach-aches kept certain of my classmates from attending lessons in the winter, but were unfailingly cured by the sound of the dinner-bell.

I have made some enquiries among the older locals regarding the superstition against the cross, but without success. No one denies that superstitions exist, but no one admits to knowing of them – to me, at least. So, as you can see, the matter seems to border on your particular area of expertise. For myself, I do not know what to believe, though certainly science denies such things. You may find there is some mundane explanation, if you agree to come, or perhaps you will find that there are indeed “more things in heaven and earth” as Hamlet told Horatio.

Please consider my invitation. My home will be at your disposal.

Very sincerely yours,
Dr. Janet Evans

WELSH MINE COLLAPSE

A roof collapsed at a slate mine in the village of Llantywyll in north Wales yesterday, trapping some 50 people including the local Methodist minister, a Mr. Griffith, who was conducting Sunday services in the mine. Rescue efforts were hampered by the fact that the members of the local rescue brigade were trapped underground with the other congregants.

Local people report that everyone was brought out with no loss of life and few injuries. Mrs. Myfanwy Thomas, the mine's owner, has arranged for a geological survey and additional shoring work as several smaller collapses have prevented the mine from returning to operation.

The Times understands that it is unusual for a minister to conduct services in a mine rather than in the village's Methodist chapel. Mr. Griffith is said to be under doctor's orders while he recovers from a broken leg, and has not as yet been able to shed any light on this question.

2B: Newspaper clipping

2A: Dr. Evans' letter

My Dear,

I hope you will forgive my presumption in writing to you after so long without much contact between us. I offer no excuse for my lapse in correspondence, though I hope you will look kindly upon my explanation, which follows directly, and upon my plea for your help. I ask not for myself, but for my wayward brother Martin, who as you know has driven our parents to the brink of despair since he resolved to abandon his family and business for the gypsy life of a poet. Long have we worried that he would come to a bad end, and now I fear—though I pray I am mistaken—that the worst has come to pass.

It has been more than two months since anyone in the family heard from my brother. Though his letters were invariably requests for money, they did at least confirm that he was still alive. With mother and father being kept at home by ill health and the concerns of business, it fell to me to travel to London and search for him, starting at the last address to which he asked for money to be sent.

To make a long story short, I came at last to Newford House, at Gladstone Place in the borough of Hampstead. It is an artistic colony, filled with people of the most peculiar and disturbing sort, although I will admit that I had become quite well acquainted with this type of person in the course of my search. Although little sense was to be had from those living there, most of whom were clearly under the influence of drink and worse, I did learn that Martin had been there, but had not been seen for some time: depending on whom I asked, this was between one and three weeks ago. No one could say where he went.

After a few minutes, a tall lady came down the stairs to find out who I was and what I wanted. A visible change came over the others, who had been full of crass jokes and improper invitations but swiftly put on an air of deference. I gathered that her name was 'Kitty' and that she was the leader of this questionable community.

I must confess that she frightened me. By contrast with her subjects—I can call them such, for they fawned and cringed like sycophants—she stood tall and straight, and there was something in her eyes that frightened me, though I cannot say precisely what it was. This 'Kitty' received me with courtesy and offered me tea as she heard my questions, though I felt that she learned more from me than I from her, without asking anything.

She repeated the tale told me by the others, that Martin—whom she called a 'dear boy,' which unsettled me unaccountably—had resided there briefly before moving on to an unknown destination. Her community was open to all, she explained, and it was common for visitors to appear unannounced, stay as long as they cared, and leave without notice.

Her words were quite reasonable, and perfectly in keeping with what I had already heard, but they rang false to me. I know my brother, and given a place to stay and compose—especially among such company, and with such a lack of financial obligation that he had not been obliged to beg the family for money—I know that nothing would induce him to leave.

I know myself, too, and I know that I can get no further with this 'Kitty' woman. Therefore I beg you, by the love you bear our family, to help us find Martin, or to find out what has become of him.

I enclose a photograph of Martin—not a recent one, regretfully, but sufficient for you or another to recognize him by—and will wait anxiously for any news.

Your loving Amelia



3B: *The photograph*

Coming round the corner into the High Street, I observed a young man riding a bicycle in the direction of the station. He appeared drunk and evidently had great difficulty controlling the machine, falling off it three times as I approached him. He did not seem to hear my challenge to stop and was unable to account for the ownership of the bicycle, saying at first that he had borrowed it from a friend, and when unable to give the name of this friend, that he had found it leaning against a wall.

When I asked where he was going, he replied that he had to leave Hampstead immediately because his life was in danger. He declined to name the person who threatened him, saying only that 'she will find me'. He repeated this several times, growing more agitated as he did so. I charged him that he was drunk in charge of the conveyance and that I suspected him of having stolen it, and told him that he would spend the night in the cells at Hampstead Police Station and be questioned in the morning when he was sober. He seemed calmer after this, and offered no resistance, although he asked if the cells were secure enough to keep him safe.

Once at the police station, the young man identified himself as Martin Beddowes and gave his ~~name~~ occupation as 'poet' and his address as Newford House, Gladstone Place, Hampstead. Owing to his condition he was unable to give any further information, but Newford House is well known to local police as a residence occupied by a colony of artistic persons of various kinds, and the subject of regular complaints by its neighbours.

The following morning, he received a visit from Mrs. Danville of Newford House where he had been staying. He seemed afraid at first but was calmer after the two had spoken together for a few minutes. Mrs. Danville said that the bicycle belonged to one of the other guests staying at her residence and offered to return it to its owner and to pay any fines or damages. Mr. Beddowes left with her, apparently of his own accord, and the matter was closed.

3C: *The police report*

3. EXPANDED PROFESSION TABLE

D66 modified by Resources (see page 214 in the *Vaesen* core rulebook)

POOR	WORKER	BURGHER	ARISTOCRAT	PROFESSION	SEE TABLE	RESOURCES
11–15	—	—	—	Vagabond	Vagabond (A)	0
16–22	11	—	—	Thief	Vagabond (A)	+1
23–24	12–14	—	—	Enforcer	Servant (B)	+2
25–31	15–16	—	—	<i>Strongman</i>	<i>Athlete (K)</i>	+1
32–33	21–23	—	—	Magician	Occultist (D)	+1
34–36	24–25	—	—	Day Laborer	Vagabond (A)	+1
41–43	26–31	—	—	Sailor	Officer (E)	+2
44–52	32–33	11–12	—	Soldier	Officer (E)	+2
53	34	—	—	<i>Circus artist</i>	<i>Entertainer (L)</i>	+1
54	35	—	—	<i>Boxer</i>	<i>Athlete (K)</i>	+1
55–56	36–41	—	—	Preacher	Priest (J)	+1
61–62	42–43	—	—	Butler	Servant (B)	+2
63	44–45	—	—	Chef	Servant (B)	+2
64	46	—	—	<i>Escape artist</i>	<i>Athlete (K)</i>	+1
65	51–52	—	—	Psychic	Occultist (D)	+2
—	53–54	13–14	—	<i>Singer</i>	<i>Entertainer (L)</i>	+2
—	55–56	15–16	—	Police Officer	Private detective (F)	+2
66	61–62	21	—	Hunter	Hunter (C)	+2
—	63–64	22	—	Forest Ranger	Hunter (C)	+2
—	—	23	11–14	Explorer	Hunter (C)	+3
—	—	24	15	Illusionist	Occultist (D)	+2
—	65	25	—	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Entertainer (L)</i>	+2
—	—	26	—	Surgeon	Doctor (I)	+2
—	—	31	—	Vicar	Priest (J)	+2
—	—	32	—	Detective	Private detective (F)	+3
—	66	33	16	<i>Spy</i>	<i>Socialite (M)</i>	+3
—	—	34–35	—	Lawyer	Private detective (F)	5
—	—	36	21–23	Author	Writer (G)	+1
—	—	41–42	—	Journalist	Writer (G)	+2
—	—	43	24–25	Poet	Writer (G)	+1

POOR	WORKER	BURGHER	ARISTOCRAT	PROFESSION	SEE TABLE	RESOURCES
—	—	—	26–31	<i>Dilettante</i>	<i>Socialite (M)</i>	+3
—	—	44	—	Psychiatrist	Doctor (I)	+2
—	—	45–46	32	Academic	Academic (H)	+3
—	—	51–54	33–34	Public Servant	Academic (H)	+3
—	—	—	35–36	<i>Investor</i>	<i>Socialite (M)</i>	+4
—	—	—	41–42	Dean	Priest (J)	+3
—	—	55–62	43	Doctor	Doctor (I)	+3
—	—	63–64	44–52	Bohemian	Academic (H)	+1
—	—	65–66	53–66	Military Officer	Officer (E)	+3

4. LIFE EVENT TABLE K

Boxer, escape artist, strongman (archetype: Athlete, page 47)

D6	EVENT	SKILLS	EQUIPMENT
1	INJURED. You were badly injured while working and convalescent for a long period of time. Perhaps a stunt gone wrong, or an overeager competitor. You still have the scars to prove it.	MEDICINE 1 VIGILANCE 1	Medical equipment
2	HARD WORK. You took what gigs you could to be able to pay the bills. It wasn't glamorous but then again, you got to do what you love to do.	AGILITY 1 FORCE 1	Liquor
3	RIVAL. Perhaps it was a close friendship that soured, or a stranger who crossed your path one too many times. You gained a rival who hates you just as much as you hate him/her.	OBSERVATION 1 STEALTH 1	Lockpicks
4	ACCOMPLISHMENT. You performed a great feat that impressed those around you. Perhaps you rescued someone from a fire, or took a bullet for your employer. Whatever it was, people looked up to you. You certainly proved your mettle.	INSPIRATION 1 FORCE 1	Fine wines
5	SWEETHEART. You met someone that made you happy and the love was reciprocated. Love gave your life meaning, and the future looked sparkling bright. Perhaps you are still together, or maybe you went your separate ways when the passion faded.	MANIPULATION 1 AGILITY 1	Pet dog
6	NATIONAL HERO. You finally did it. You might have broken a record, or won a prestigious fight. Whatever it was, suddenly you were front page news and the kids looked up to you. Eventually the spotlight faded, and maybe that was for the best. But you still miss those days.	AGILITY 1 INSPIRATION 1	Elegant disguise

4. LIFE EVENT TABLE L

Actor, circus artist, singer (archetype: Entertainer, page 48)

D6	EVENT	SKILLS	EQUIPMENT
1	SCANDAL. You found yourself in the eye of the storm. A great scandal came to light and you were caught up in it. You learned who your real friends were and what matters most in life.	VIGILANCE 1 STEALTH 1	Guard dog
2	TUTOR. You were chosen by a master of the craft as a protege. You learned a lot, but your teacher was fickle. Perhaps you parted ways later on, or maybe you are still close to this day.	LEARNING 1 INSPIRATION 1	Elegant disguise
3	HUGE FLOP. The unthinkable happened. Your show was universally panned and lost the investors a lot of money. Sure, you learnt from your mistakes but it still hurts to think about it.	INSPIRATION 1 OBSERVATION 1	Writing utensils and paper
4	UNEXPECTED SUCCESS. Suddenly it happened. You had your breakthrough and received a lot of publicity in the papers. Perhaps you wrote a sensational novel or a widely read article. Whatever it was, your time in the limelight was short. Perhaps it gave you a taste for more?	MANIPULATION 1 INSPIRATION 1	Fine wines
5	SECRET LOVER. You met someone powerful and fell in love. At first it was a passionate affair but soon it turned into something else. Maybe they paid you to keep quiet. Or perhaps an angry spouse became your enemy.	OBSERVATION 1 STEALTH 1	Camera
6	TALK OF THE TOWN. After years of hard work, you finally made it. You became the star of your own show and the crowds lined up around the block. Suddenly everyone wanted to know you and new doors opened up.	INSPIRATION 1 MANIPULATION 1	Musical instrument

4. LIFE EVENT TABLE M

Dilettante, investor, spy (archetype: Socialite, page 49)

D6	EVENT	SKILLS	EQUIPMENT
1	ADDICTION. You developed a severe addiction to some kind of substance. The need for the next fix consumed your life for some time. You made contacts in the underworld who ensured you got what you needed. Perhaps you finally broke free of your addiction, or maybe you remain its slave.	MEDICINE 1 VIGILANCE 1	Portable laboratory
2	JOINED A CLUB. Lady luck smiled on you and you were granted membership in an exclusive club. You made new friends and important connections over brandy and cigars. Perhaps you are still a member or maybe you left it behind.	MANIPULATION 1 OBSERVATION 1	Map book
3	RIVAL. Perhaps it was a close friendship that soured, or a stranger who crossed your path one too many times. You gained a rival who hates you just as much as you hate him/her.	OBSERVATION 1 STEALTH 1	Pistol
4	SOCIALITE. You mingled with high society, made powerful friends, and lived a life of luxury. Perhaps you made yourself insufferable at dinner parties; perhaps you just grew tired of the shallow life.	INSPIRATION 1 MANIPULATION 1	Pet dog
5	SWEETHEART. You met someone that made you happy and the love was reciprocated. Love gave your life meaning, and the future looked sparkling bright. Perhaps you are still together, or maybe you went your separate ways when the passion faded.	OBSERVATION 1 INSPIRATION 1	Opera glasses
6	OPEN HOUSE. Your parties were the best of their kind and people of note flocked to your events. You found yourself with an entourage of important people looking up to you. All this took hard work. Maybe you still host your soirées, or maybe they are just memories.	MANIPULATION 1 OBSERVATION 1	Book collection

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and Johan Egerkrans

CONTENT WARNING

The old folk tales often expressed dark and mature themes, and thus the *Vaesen RPG* explores such themes as well. This is a horror game and not suitable for children, at least not without the Game-master first modifying the content.

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